

MONASTIC WOMEN AND RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN
LATE MEDIEVAL BOLOGNA

Sherri Franks Johnson explores the roles of religious women in the changing ecclesiastical and civic structure of late medieval Bologna, demonstrating how convents negotiated a place in their urban context and in the church at large. During this period Bologna was the most important city in the Papal States after Rome. Using archival records from nunneries in the city, Johnson argues that communities of religious women varied in the extent to which they sought official recognition from the male authorities of religious orders. While some nunneries felt that it was important to their religious life to gain recognition from monks and friars, others were content to remain local and autonomous. In a period often described as an era of decline and of the marginalization of religious women, Johnson shows instead that they saw themselves as active participants in their religious orders, in the wider church, and in their local communities.

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SHERRI FRANKS JOHNSON

University of California, Riverside



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For Martin and Louie

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Introduction

Religious women's communities in the later Middle Ages varied in the strength of their connection to monastic orders. While some convents were founded as part of a large, centralized order such as the Cistercians, Dominicans, or Franciscans, in other cases religious communities were more focused on local matters, following a basic rule without a close connection to other similar houses. The histories of convents in high and late medieval Bologna demonstrate the diversity and fluidity of women's monastic life in this period. For example, the Dominican nuns of Sant'Agnese, founded by the Blessed Diana d'Andalò with the support of Dominic and his successor, Jordan of Saxony, began with a strong sense of belonging to the Order of Preachers and maintained that identity throughout their history. Other communities changed rules or orders over time. Santa Caterina di Quarto was established in 1205 as a double house with its own customs, and developed a small congregation of daughter houses in Emilia-Romagna and Lombardy. The house was given the Rule of Saint Augustine in the mid thirteenth century, and by the early fourteenth century was primarily a house for nuns. Though it was never formally incorporated, by the fifteenth century it had become a Dominican convent. An extreme example of fluctuating religious affiliation is San Guglielmo, which moved back and forth between the Benedictine and Augustinian Rules, identifying as Cistercian during some eras and becoming Dominican in

the early sixteenth century. Still others, such as the Benedictine San Gervasio and the Augustinian Sant'Orsolina, followed a basic rule without developing strong connections to other similar houses, and maintained their autonomous status through the Middle Ages.

By examining the histories of religious women's communities in Bologna, which numbered over thirty by 1300, we can get a sense of how convents in the late Middle Ages negotiated their place in the church as an institution, both in their interactions with the clerical hierarchy and in their relationship to monastic orders. They sought support among local clerical and lay patrons. They were aware of their religious surroundings, and could use their knowledge of other women's communities – of their own and of different orders – to develop partnerships in difficult times. In other cases, conflicts arose between religious communities over resources or over issues of reform and observance, with the latter sometimes serving as a pretext for the former. In this study, I investigate the dynamics of monastic life for religious women in their local context, as well as their place in a network of regular and secular clergy – including other convents within and across orders – against a backdrop of social and political change.

Recent studies of religious women have led us to rethink the historical narrative of women's marginalization from emerging religious orders such as the Cistercians, Dominicans, and Franciscans.¹ These studies question early scholarship on women's monasticism

¹ On women in the Cistercian Order, see Constance Berman, especially "Were there Twelfth-Century Cistercian Nuns?," *Church History* 68.4 (1999): 824–64; Brigitte Degler-Spengler, "The Incorporation of Cistercian Nuns into the Order in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century," in *Medieval Religious Women*, vol. 3: *Hidden Springs: Cistercian Monastic Women*, ed. John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995); Elizabeth Freeman, "Cistercian Nuns in Medieval England: Unofficial meets Official," in *Elite and Popular Religion: Papers Read at the 2004 Summer Meeting and the 2005 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006), 114–15; Erin Jordan,

that posited a deterioration of religious women's fortunes, thought to be influenced by the Gregorian Reform's greater emphasis on clerical celibacy and marked by periodic decisions of the orders' General Chapters to reject responsibility for the care of nuns.² Earlier works tended to evaluate the position of religious women by the extent to which they were accepted by their male monastic counterparts, focusing on women's marginalization from monastic orders because of monks' and friars' reluctance to provide religious care for nuns. This narrative has continued to exert influence on later scholarship on women's monastic life.³

For a little over a decade, scholars have sought to offer a more complete picture of religious women's lives, examining ways that they understood their own spirituality and their own place in the church and society. Newer scholarship on women's monasticism

"Gender Concerns: Monks, Nuns, and Patronage of the Cistercian Order in Thirteenth-Century Flanders and Hainaut," *Speculum* 87 (2012): 62–94; Anne Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011). On women in the Franciscan movement, see Maria Pia Alberzoni, *Clare of Assisi and the Poor Sisters in the Thirteenth Century* (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2004) and Lezlie Knox, *Creating Clare of Assisi* (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2008). On Dominican nuns, see also Alberzoni, "Jordan of Saxony and the Monastery of St. Agnese in Bologna," *Franciscan Studies* 68 (2010): 1–19 and Anne Winston-Allen, *Convent Chronicles: Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004). For studies that look at women across religious orders in their local context, see especially Marilyn Oliva, *The Convent and the Community in Late Medieval England: Female Monasteries in the Diocese of Norwich, 1350–1540* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1998) and Sigrid Schmitt, "Geistliche Frauen und städtische Welt: Kanonissen – Nonnen – Beginen und ihre Umwelt am Beispiel der Stadt Straßburg im Spätmittelalter (1250–1525)," Habilitationsschrift, University of Mainz, 2001.

² Two classic works in this vein are Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1995) – this was first published in 1935; Micheline de Fontette, *Les Religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1967).

³ The continuing focus on conflict between religious women and male-centered monastic orders is reflected in the chapters on high and late medieval nuns in Jo Ann McNamara's *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), especially 260–323. Since this work is in part a synthesis of scholarship on monastic women based on McNamara's extensive knowledge of the field, these chapters provide a useful overview of the state of scholarship at the time of the writing of the book.

has aimed to understand nuns' experience, paying more attention to religious women's agency. Bruce Venarde, Constance Berman, and Lezlie Knox have persuasively argued against the historiographic narrative of religious women's decline in the late Middle Ages.⁴ Knox and other scholars, especially those working on religious women in German-speaking lands, have drawn on convent chronicles, visionary literature, patronage of artistic activity, and nuns' own scribal, artistic, and musical creations to study women's experience and expression.⁵ Where such sources are available, they provide valuable insight into how religious women understood their own lives.

These recent scholars have moved beyond the long-standing focus on legislation by the leadership of monastic orders such as the Cistercians, Dominicans, and Franciscans in the early and mid thirteenth century that sought to limit or reject the care of nuns, demonstrating instead that these decrees and statutes do not tell the whole story. Some women's communities were part of the growth of these orders, and houses of religious women continued to integrate into monastic orders over time. This research has been vital to our growing understanding of the lives of religious women in the High and late Middle Ages.

⁴ Bruce Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890–1215* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Constance Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Knox, *Creating Clare*.

⁵ Fiona Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Gertrud Jaron Lewis, *By Women, For Women, About Women: The Sister-Books of Fourteenth-Century Germany* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1996); Winston-Allen, *Convent Chronicles*; Erika Lindgren, *Sensual Encounters: Monastic Women and Spirituality in Medieval Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Anna Harrison, "'I Am Wholly Your Own': Liturgical Piety and Community Among the Nuns of Helfta," *Church History* 78.3 (2009): 549–83; Harrison, "'Oh! What Treasure Is in This Book?': Writing, Reading, and Community at the Monastery of Helfta," *Viator* 39.1 (2008): 75–106.

Yet as important as these studies have been to our knowledge of the lives of religious women in the High and late Middle Ages, a focus on large religious orders misses the substantial portion of women's monastic communities that did not have stable ties to any particular order. In the older narrative of women's marginalization from religious orders, this status might have been explained by failure to gain acceptance and religious care from the emerging religious orders. Evidence from the archives of nunneries in Bologna suggests instead that the women in these communities may not have sought incorporation into orders, preferring instead to remain under the bishop's jurisdiction. At times, they took steps to avoid falling under the authority of religious orders. In important ways, the histories of convents in late medieval Bologna follow paths that suggest the need for further re-evaluation of our understanding of religious women's place in monastic orders and in the church as a whole.

SOURCES

This study is based on analysis of the archival holdings of women's monasteries in the records of suppressed pious organizations (the *Fondo Demaniale*) at the Archivio di Stato in Bologna. As the second city of the Papal States for much of the period under investigation, Bologna provides a useful case for studying the actions of nunneries within a local context and within the larger church. Church officials – many of whom had spent time in the city's university – were attentive to events in the city and knew its religious communities. Despite papal attempts to promote norms of association with recognized and centralized orders, many nunneries remained independent well into the fifteenth century, generally following the Rule of Augustine or Benedict but without ties to larger monastic organizations. Bologna also experienced political changes that were common to many Italian

city-states. Families and factions rose and fell as the city shifted from republican government to alternating rule between local despots and papal legates, with a brief republican resurgence in the late fourteenth century. Examining the histories of convents in a small geographical area allows a detailed study of houses of a variety of religious affiliations, including those that maintained a close alignment with one order or rule as well as those that changed their rule or practices over time. As a case study, Bologna provides an example of a city that is close to the center of Catholic power, and therefore would be strongly influenced by papal reform programs.

The archival holdings of the convents in Bologna include over 3,000 charters for the era from the last decade of the twelfth century through the first decade of the sixteenth century. I have followed the history of houses founded during the era of robust growth of monastic houses in Bologna – roughly from 1190 to 1290. Dynamics in the church and in the civic environment led to continued changes in rule, order, and location of many convents through the early sixteenth century, when many of the trends I trace in this study reached a stasis. Tracing these changes provides the opportunity to examine how religious women in the later Middle Ages fit into the institutional structures of the church (including religious orders, diocesan clergy, and general church hierarchy) and how they interacted with their local environment.

Of roughly thirty-five convents that were active in Bologna by the end of the thirteenth century, there are fourteen convents with significant remaining documentation, along with an additional five that have a smaller number of remaining charters in the holdings of other monastic houses, usually because of the unions of those houses. The number of extant documents for each community from the approximately three centuries that are the focus of this study varies substantially, from the thirty-five charters in the records of

San Pietro Martire to the voluminous archival holdings of Sant'Agnese, for which over 1,000 documents remain from its founding to 1500. For those houses with few remaining charters, brief mentions in civic and ecclesiastical documents as well as in chronicles and histories written in the Middle Ages and early modern period can at least provide basic information, such as the approximate foundation date, rule, and circumstances of suppression or dissolution.

A large percentage of the documents in these archives were kept for their economic importance – sales, purchases, long-term leases, wills, and appointments of proctors with a general mandate to manage the community's economic and legal activities or to deal with specific issues. For both property transactions and wills, many of the documents in the convent archives involve the community itself, but many do not. In these cases, the convent may be serving as a repository for a family's documents, or the charter might be part of an earlier chain of evidence for the community's right to a particular piece of property.

A relatively small percentage of the documents relate to the religious life of the community as a religious house. These documents include the elections and confirmation of abbesses, visitations and other investigations into issues of observance, and indulgences for those who visit the church on particular days, sometimes specifying that the person must assist – through monetary aid or labor – with building, repair, or sustenance of the monastery. They also include petitions to acquire or affirm privileges and exemptions from various levies and forms of jurisdiction.

In my understanding of the overall histories of these communities, I have been greatly aided by the work of Gabriella Zarri on women's monastic houses in medieval and early modern Bologna. Zarri's 1973 study begins with an essay outlining trends in foundations and dissolutions of women's monastic communities. The

second part of Zarri's study includes details about every nunnery in Bologna from the twelfth through the seventeenth centuries, organized alphabetically by house. Using evidence from the monasteries' archives as well as information from chroniclers and historians that in some cases refer to documents that are no longer extant, Zarri describes the foundation or earliest evidence of the existence of each convent, their rule and order, and also any changes that occurred in these practices or affiliations. Beyond this information, she notes the location of the convent, any changes in location that might have occurred, and other such significant events in the convent's history.

Zarri's work provides an overview of the landscape of women's monasticism in Bologna, but the scope of the study did not allow her to delve into the details of the events and changes she outlined. My aim is to expand on her work, using the histories of these convents as case studies in order to investigate two main questions: how did monastic women interact with religious institutions and officials to form and sustain their communities, and what influence did local factors (many of which are not specifically religious) have on the lives of religious women? The histories of convents in Bologna raise questions about the frameworks scholars have employed for understanding the complexity of monastic life in the later Middle Ages.

Where possible, I have drawn on secondary scholarship to provide a way to compare Bologna to other cities. Though a study of one city cannot be generalized to offer a description of women's monastic life in all of Italy (and especially not in Latin Christendom as a whole), I hope that this book will contribute to the ongoing collection of detailed information about the workings of monastic life for women, along with the continued questioning of older scholarly assumptions about religious women's lives. Variation and changes may happen to a greater or lesser extent in other locations depending

on many factors such as urban or rural environment, forms of local governance, era of greatest growth (for example, is there a tradition of independent Benedictine and Augustinian houses, or are monasteries primarily founded after centralized religious orders begin to become the norm?), and regional influence of particular monastic orders. In-depth archival studies of convents in their local context can confirm, complicate, or contradict received ideas about women's religious life.

RELIGIOUS WOMEN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
CENTRALIZED MONASTIC ORDERS

In order to understand the place of women's monastic communities in religious orders and in the church at large, it is useful to examine briefly what it meant to be part of a monastic order in the Middle Ages. Monastic organizations could vary greatly from place to place and over time. Recent work by scholars such as Constance Berman and Maria Pia Alberzoni – on Cistercians and on mendicant orders, respectively – has focused attention on the impact these changes had on monastic life in general and on women in these orders in particular.⁶ In her work on the Cistercian Order, Berman has demonstrated that over the course of the twelfth century, the term *ordo* transitioned from primarily referring to a general way of life (for example, the *ordo monasticus*) to increasingly designating a particular group to which an individual or a house could belong (for example, *ordo Cisterciensis*). In the course of the twelfth century, the Cistercian Order became a model for a new, highly organized form of monastic life, which included regular meetings of General Chapters for decisions that would apply to all member houses and

⁶ Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution*, 46–92; Alberzoni, *Clare of Assisi*, 159.

mechanisms for visitation and correction of monastic communities belonging to the order. In her studies of women in the Franciscan and Dominican Orders, Alberzoni argues that papal efforts in the early thirteenth century to organize disparate women's communities into relatively cohesive groups associated with the new mendicant orders led to a significant change in the concept of the religious order, and that the promotion of this new kind of religious order is part of the emergence of "papal monasticism."⁷

I shall use the term "centralized monastic orders" to refer to orders that had General Chapters and governing officials for the order as a whole, had developed some mechanisms for determining which houses did or did not belong to the order, and had some means of regulating member houses, including visitations. Actions of popes in the thirteenth century make clear that they were attempting to promote a standardized and centralized form of monastic order. While women were not easily integrated into new, centralized orders, this was not the only form of monastic life available. Women continued to participate in a monasticism that resembled the earlier, more local form of religious organization.

The difficulty of integrating women into monastic orders was not only because of men's reluctance to accept responsibility for the care of nuns – it was also because of the existence of competing models of monasticism. Variation in monastic organization continued through the period under investigation. Affiliation – either through incorporation or through looser forms of ties – to centralized religious orders was a developing norm from the mid to late twelfth century, promoted by thirteenth-century popes. Nevertheless, many communities remained locally focused, or existed in an intermediate state between incorporation and autonomy.

⁷ Alberzoni, *Clare of Assisi*, 155; Alberzoni, "Jordan of Saxony," 19.

FROM ORDO MONASTICUS TO RELIGIOUS ORDERS

The increasingly centralized orders of the High Middle Ages contrast to earlier monastic practice and organization. For much of the early Middle Ages, even discussing religious life in terms of belonging to one monastic order or another is anachronistic – rather, *the* monastic order encompassed all those who withdrew from the world to live a communal religious life according to a rule. In the early centuries of monastic life, individual monasteries employed a variety of rules – some communities relied on one rule to guide their communal life, while others combined elements of two or more rules in their own monastic customs. In western Europe, rules available to monastic communities included those of Benedict, Caesarius, Columbanus, and Leander of Seville, among many others.⁸

Monastic practice in the early Middle Ages was diverse, with individual houses adapting existing rules to their use and supplementing them with customaries. In some cases, communities solved the problem of religious care of nuns by including men and women in a single religious establishment. As was the case with monastic houses of men, women's communities often had patronage rights over nearby churches, with the priests serving as chaplains to the nuns and to the local community.⁹ Though there may be ties between nearby male and female monastic houses, networks of monastic affiliation were small and local.

⁸ For more on monastic practice in the early Middle Ages, see Karl Suso Frank, *With Greater Liberty: A Short History of Christian Monasticism and Religious Orders* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1993); C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (Harlow, UK and New York: Longman, 2001); Julie Ann Smith, *Ordering Women's Lives: Penitentials and Nunnery Rules in the Early Medieval West* (Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate, 2001); Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500–900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

⁹ McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, 126.

Beginning in the Carolingian era in the west, authorities with an interest in church governance moved to standardize monastic practice, adopting Benedict's Rule as the standard rule for monastic life. Though the decline of the Carolingian dynasty meant that many of their reforms had limited impact, many communities that had previously followed other rules did adopt Benedict's rule. In the eleventh century, some other groups that had lived communal lives without a rule – for instance, groups of canons and canonesses – began to look to a rule attributed to Saint Augustine as a guide for organizing their communities. Though some communities followed other rules, these two became the primary guides for the organization of monastic life.

Benedictine reform movements led by monasteries such as Cluny and Citeaux led to the formation of centralized monastic orders that could found new houses in the order, could accept or reject existing houses petitioning to join the group, and could regulate and correct member houses. In its first two centuries, Cluny and its daughter houses can be characterized as an intermediate step in this development, beginning as a congregation whose dependent monasteries were extensions of the mother house, and gradually developing governing institutions that would come to characterize centralized orders. As is well known, Cluny was founded in 910 by Duke William of Aquitaine under the direct protection of the Holy See, addressing the problem of lay intervention in the appointment of religious personnel and other matters of monastic governance.¹⁰ The influence of Cluny spread rapidly as Cluny founded new houses

¹⁰ For more on Cluny and its congregation, see Barbara Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Marcel Pacaut, *L'Ordre de Cluny (909–1789)* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1986).

and as existing houses accepted the abbot of Cluny as their superior. Beyond these houses with official ties to Cluny, other monasteries adopted Cluny's practices while remaining independent of the mother house. The distinction between dependent and independent houses meant less and less as the congregation grew; the priories of Cluny were far too numerous for the abbot to visit or regulate, and there were no regional organizations to assist the abbot. Reform movements influenced by Cluny, such as those centered on Gorze and Hirsau in the Holy Roman Empire, also led to the growth of sizeable congregations.¹¹ Though Cluny remained an exclusively male congregation until the mid eleventh century, women were an integral part of monasteries in the Hirsau reform movement. Monasteries such as Admont and Wessobrunn included both men and women in a single community. Women shared the work of the community, including scribal activity.¹²

Developments in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries aided in the government of Cluny's congregation, specifically in the circulation of written customs and the practice of heads of houses in a congregation meeting periodically in General Chapters. For example, the customs of Cluny were compiled in written form in 1068 as the *Consuetudines cenobii Cluniacensis*, then revised in the *Consuetudines antiquiores* in the 1080s, providing standard, written customs that could be used by Cluniac houses throughout western and central Europe.¹³ In 1132, Abbot Peter the Venerable held the first General

¹¹ On the Hirsau reforms, see Hermann Jakobs, *Die Hirsauer: Ihre Ausbreitung und Rechtsstellung im Zeitalter des Investiturstreites* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1961); on Gorze, see Kas-sius Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny: Studien zu den monastischen Lebensformen und Gegensätzen im Hochmittelalter* (Rome: Herder, 1951).

¹² Alison I. Beach, *Women as Scribes: Book Production and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Bavaria* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 32–103.

¹³ Bede Lackner, *The Eleventh-Century Background of Cîteaux* (Washington, DC: Cistercian Publications Consortium Press, 1972), 48.

Chapter of the order. As Giles Constable has argued, the developments of the twelfth century provided well-articulated lines of accountability and jurisdiction that did not exist in Cluny's first two centuries, but rather arose contemporaneously with the administrative structures of the Cistercians and the Premonstratensians.

Cîteaux and its daughter houses were also influential in the development of new norms for monastic governance. An innovation of Cîteaux was the formation of lines of filiation by which older monasteries could establish and govern newer houses. Under the third abbot, Stephen Harding (1109–34), Cîteaux grew large enough to establish four new communities that would become, as the order grew, the four chief daughter houses of Cîteaux.¹⁴ Instead of having direct jurisdiction over all Cistercian abbeys, the abbot of Cîteaux was responsible for overseeing its immediate daughter houses, which in turn governed monasteries founded by their monks. According to the traditional history of Cistercian development, the Cistercians held the first chapter general of abbots in 1119, though there is recent scholarly dispute regarding how quickly this became a regular practice. In the first half of the twelfth century, the Cistercians developed the *Consuetudines*, or “Book of Customs,” which included a compilation of the decisions of General Chapters, descriptions of standard liturgical practice, and guidelines for regulating the *conversi*, the lay brothers who carried out much of the manual labor in Cistercian monasteries. The traditional dating of the Cistercian constitution, the *Charter of Charity*, attributes its creation to Stephen Harding. The eminent Cistercian historian Louis Lekai argues that the Charter may have existed in early stages during Stephen's abbacy, but did not reach its final form until sometime between 1165 and 1190.¹⁵ The

¹⁴ Louis Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977), 18.

¹⁵ Lekai, *Cistercians*, 26–9.

work of Constance Berman has further raised questions about the pace of development of the institutions that came to be characteristic of the Cistercian Order.¹⁶

Reforming councils and popes promoted Cîteaux's form of monastic organization, particularly in the thirteenth century. Canon Thirteen of the Fourth Lateran Council mandated that religious houses should adopt an accepted monastic rule and affiliate with a recognized rule and institution (*regula et institutionem*).¹⁷ By the time of the establishment of the new mendicant orders in the early thirteenth century, Pope Innocent III, his advisors, and his successors had adopted the model of Cîteaux as their ideal, and decreed at this council that similar monastic houses that were not already doing so should hold regular regional meetings. Prompted in part by concerns regarding heresy, they aimed to use this form of monastic life to regulate and organize the disparate monastic and other ascetic communities that were emerging throughout Latin Christendom.

The early thirteenth century saw the emergence of the mendicant orders, exemplified by the Francesco Bernardone's Order of Friars Minor and Dominic de Guzman's Order of Preachers.¹⁸ These orders departed from the practice of previous monastic associations in that their ideal was not to withdraw from the world into a monastery – and thus stability of place was not a value for them as it was for Benedictine monks – but rather to minister and preach to the laity, adopting a life of poverty and itinerancy. Whether they adopted this practice as a strategy to attract people in heretical groups who

¹⁶ Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution*.

¹⁷ Joseph Alberigo et al., ed., *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, Centro documentazione, Istituto per le scienze religiose, Bologna (Basel: Herder, 1962), 218.

¹⁸ For a general history of the Franciscan Order, see John Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). On the Dominican Order, see William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order: Origins and Growth to 1500*, vol. 1 (New York: Alba House, 1966).

rejected worldly wealth back to the Catholic Church or out of a genuine desire to live a life of apostolic poverty, or some combination of both, in their early years the friars of the mendicant orders did not want to be tied to a monastery or to accumulate property and wealth. Whereas in other orders, the abbot of the main house served as head of the order, the Dominicans and Franciscans were not based around a focal monastery, and thus had to find another way to establish a succession. Initially the founders of these groups served as the leaders, though Francis quickly ceded this position to a successor.¹⁹ These orders created the office of Minister General or Master General, who presided over a General Chapter composed of representatives from the various provinces. The general and provincial chapters would determine where new communities should be founded and whether to accept extant houses into the order. The relatively quick formation of governing structures in these new orders demonstrates the changing organization of religious life. Whereas the early Cluniacs and Cistercians would not have expected to need institutions to govern transnational orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans could look at their predecessors for examples on which to model their constitutions, General Chapters and systems of visitation. By the time of the foundation of the Order of Preachers and the Order of Friars Minor, these were important elements for new religious orders, and older orders were encouraged to develop such institutions.

WOMEN AND RELIGIOUS ORDERS

Changes in norms for monastic organization had implications for women in religious life. Whether a convent was an independent convent or part of a centralized monastic order, there was a need

¹⁹ Rosalind B. Brooke, *Early Franciscan Government: Elias to Bonaventure*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge University Press, 1959).

to find male clergy who would provide religious care of nuns (*cura monialium*). The question of whether nuns were able to receive religious care from members of the same order becomes more salient once centralized religious orders become a norm of monastic life in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Rather than seeing the reluctance of men in religious orders to administer religious care to their sisters as evidence of increasing marginalization of religious women, we should consider the possibility that the expectation of receiving religious care from clergy who followed the same rule and order was a by-product of the formation of centralized orders in the twelfth century. While the conflict between men and women in religious orders was an important dynamic in high medieval monasticism, many communities of religious women continued in an older, more local monastic tradition rather than pursuing integration into religious orders. This is also true of many communities of monks and canons that continued to live under the Rule of Saint Benedict or Saint Augustine without becoming a part of these new, centralized orders.

One of the implications of this new understanding of monastic life was the problem of the participation of women's houses in these centralized orders. Though convents could, as they had always done, obtain religious care from local priests or from ordained monks of any religious order, many convents saw the reception of the *cura monialium* from their religious brethren as being an important element of belonging to a particular religious order. As had always been the case, some monks and friars considered ministering to their religious sisters to be an important part of their calling.²⁰ Other male monastics were willing to provide religious care to certain communities of women, but preferred to be able to do this on a

²⁰ See Constant Mews, "Negotiating the Boundaries of Gender in Religious Life: Robert of Arbrissel and Hersende, Abelard and Heloise," *Viator* 37 (2006): 113–48; Fiona Griffiths, "The Cross and the *Cura monialium*: Robert of Arbrissel, John the Evangelist, and the Pastoral Care of Women in the Age of Reform," *Speculum* 83.2 (2008): 303–30.

voluntary basis instead of as an obligation. Significant decisions of the General Chapters of several religious orders reflect this point of view. Yet other religious men vocally rejected contact with nuns and other religious women.

The struggles between religious women and the leaders of monastic orders in the thirteenth century have frequently been cast as a sign of the decline of women's status in monasticism. An alternative understanding of the conflict over the responsibilities of monks and friars for the care of religious women is that it was a product of a new understanding of the organization of monastic life into international religious orders in which consistency of practice was desirable, rather than the diverse and localized monasticism of the earlier Middle Ages. In a more decentralized age of monasticism, individual communities of monks could form ties to nearby convents – the question of the *cura monialium* was not a matter of policy for a large monastic order to decide at a General Chapter, but rather a matter of local negotiation. Even after the formation of centralized orders and the promotion of this model as an ideal for monastic life by prelates, popes, and councils, houses remained that followed the rules of St. Benedict or Augustine without ties to a formal order. Understanding the ties between religious women and centralized orders is important, but it does not give a complete view of monastic life. Studies focused on the broad spectrum of monastic communities in their local and regional context can enrich existing scholarship by taking into account the diverse and fluid nature of women's monasticism in the later Middle Ages.

OVERVIEW OF BOOK

This book is divided into two main sections. Chapters 1 through 3 focus primarily on the foundations of religious communities and

their developing relationship to religious orders, while Chapters 4, 5, and 6 examine the influence of local events on the histories and fortunes of convents. Chapter 1 describes the diverse forms of religious life for women in Bologna in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, focusing especially on a hermitess attended by a group of canons and on two double houses and the colonies and daughter houses that sprang from them. These communities differed from traditional monastic houses in that they in many cases followed rules other than the Augustinian or Benedictine Rule, and in their inclusion of men and women in a single community. Along with comparable groups in other parts of Europe such as the Fontevrists and the Premonstratensians, they are examples of the diversity of religious groups in this period that led to the Fourth Lateran Council reforms and their attempt to impose order on religious life.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine the effects of the development of new forms of religious organization. Chapter 2 focuses on the relatively few new communities that were founded as part of the Dominican, Franciscan, and Cistercian Orders, examining the formation of ties to these orders, their defense of their status, and the development of their relationship to their brethren in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Chapter 3 returns to the early thirteenth-century communities discussed in Chapter 1, tracing their integration into recognized monastic orders. Reforming popes such as Gregory IX and Innocent IV wanted to make the governing bodies of religious orders responsible for the care of nuns following the rules of that order. Innocent IV mandated changes to the practices of several Bolognese nunneries and imposed on them recognized monastic rules in lieu of more obscure customs. Nunneries endeavored to retain some of their unique characteristics and practices despite these reforms, but over time came to resemble other monastic groups. A consistent trend is initial resistance to mandated changes but then a gradual integration

into the Dominican Order, which was the predominant order in Bologna. A study of this process demonstrates that the emergence of the norm of centralized monastic orders, generally associated with the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, was ongoing in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 focus on the effect of local events on the fortunes of convents. In Chapter 4, I examine the influence of governmental changes and factional turmoil on the lives of religious women. Republican governments, local despotic dynasties, and papal governors could lend monetary support and prestige to favored nunneries or could act as predators, transferring monastic property to other groups. Drawing on city statutes that detail distributions of money and grain to various pious organizations as well as attempts of papal governors to suppress nunneries to divert their wealth to other purposes, I investigate ways in which nunneries benefited from or were harmed by governing priorities, with attention to the ways that nunneries called on allies to help them negotiate the changing political landscape. Chapter 5 looks at the movement of convents from the *contado* (the countryside under the city's control) and suburbs into the city walls because of the attractions of the city in the thirteenth century and because of the need for protection in the later Middle Ages. As new convents were founded in town, some older nunneries left the countryside for new urban locations. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw further concentration of nunneries inside the city walls because of the dangers brought on by constant warfare. The change in location could also be accompanied by a change in the community, as bishops sought to gain control of nunneries previously exempted from episcopal jurisdiction when those nunneries moved inside the city walls, or could bring greater emphasis on enclosure as well as modifications to the nunnery's rule and statutes.

In Chapter 6, I examine choices that communities of religious women made in response to economic hardship, destruction caused by war, and natural disasters. Nunneries in difficult situations petitioned to unite administratively or physically with other nearby convents. These unions could follow negotiation between two houses or could be a product of a petition to a prelate, sometimes leading to displaced nuns effectively taking over another community's house. Petitioners could invoke similarity of religious observance as a rationale for uniting two particular houses, but this was not always the case. Examining the circumstances that led to these unions and whether they resulted in peaceful mergers or strife can provide clues to the identities and priorities of monastic women in the late Middle Ages and to their place in the larger church.

New foundations in the thirteenth century

Bologna in the late twelfth century followed the pattern of communities elsewhere in Europe in that there was a substantial increase in the variety of forms of religious life. For most of the twelfth century, women embarking on a religious life could choose from among one of four traditional Benedictine convents and one convent in the Order of Camaldoli, a group of reformed Benedictines. The century from 1190 to 1290 would see the number of convents in Bologna grow from five to thirty-five, including Benedictines and Augustinians, reformed Benedictine Orders such as the Camaldolese and Cistercians, and nunneries associated with the mendicants of the Dominican and Franciscan Orders. In the early years of the growth of these communities of religious women, some houses emerged that represent an intermediate step between the autonomous Benedictine houses of the twelfth century and the larger, more centralized orders that were increasingly the norm in the thirteenth century. This chapter will focus on three main communities that began as part of – or developed into – small, regional networks. A common element of these communities is that they were home to both male and female religious. Though these houses would eventually become nunneries, at their inception that outcome was certainly not clear.

The first of these religious foundations, Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, began in 1193 as an oratory for a hermitess named

Angelica. The church attached to her residence was served first by canons from the nearby house of Santa Maria di Reno, then by a group of canons residing at the church near her oratory. Only after Angelica's death in the middle of the thirteenth century and the transfer of three women from another house did Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia begin to resemble a traditional nunnery. Another group, Santa Caterina di Quarto, was founded by an itinerant preacher named Alberto, and started as a church that had dormitories for both male and female ascetics. Like Santa Maria del Monte, Santa Caterina di Quarto became a nunnery (although it retained a prior at its head), but not until it had been in existence for over a hundred years. Santa Caterina was also the mother house of a small congregation of religious communities in the Romagna and in Lombardy, beginning in 1225 and lasting into the fourteenth century. At least three of the five daughter houses were also double monasteries. Santissima Trinità di Ronzano also began as a double house and a member of the congregation of San Marco di Mantua. From this group, small cells of women would move to found new nunneries, such as San Giovanni Battista, or revive depopulated ones, including Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia after the death of its foundress.¹

The men and women associated with these institutions had counterparts in other groups that emerged in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries elsewhere in Europe.² Among the better known of these groups were the Fontevrists, Premonstratensians, and Gilbertines – all of which were congregations of houses founded in the early twelfth century by itinerant preachers and peopled by men and

¹ All three of these new foundations that emerged from Santissima Trinità initially followed the Rule of San Marco, but soon became Augustinian or Dominican. See Chapter 4, "Nunneries and Civic Life."

² Grundmann, *Religious Movements*.

women who desired to live a life of religious poverty.³ The founders of these groups organized their followers into communities following an approved monastic rule such as the Benedictine or Augustinian Rule, with some form of additional instructions such as a constitution to codify their particular vision of the community's practices and customs. Closer geographically and chronologically is the Humiliati movement, which had been considered heretical in the late twelfth century but was reconciled to the church under Innocent III, who established rules for lay houses of Humiliati and for those who made a formal profession of vows.⁴ It is probable that the same impulses that led to the formation of these groups inspired the founders of the Bolognese communities of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, Santissima Trinità di Ronzano, and Santa Caterina di Quarto.

MONASTIC HOUSES IN A GROWING CITY

These communities formed during an era of population growth in the city of Bologna, which was accompanied by changes in the physical infrastructure of the city. An important element of Bologna's geography is the building of new walls in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, protecting areas that were outside of the city's early medieval wall. The oldest part of the city, a very small rectangle defined by an eighth-century wall called the *cerchia delle "Quattro Croci,"* was not a site for the foundation of monastic houses.⁵

³ For a useful overview of ascetic groups that included men and women living in a single community, see Stephanie Haarländer, "'Schlangen unter den Fischen': Männliche und weibliche Religiösen in Doppelklöstern des hohen Mittelalters," in *Frauen und Kirche*, ed. Sigrid Schmitt (Mainz: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), 57–61. For a good discussion of issues surrounding the historical category of "double monasteries," see Katharine Sykes, "Canonici Albi et Moniales: Twelfth-Century Perceptions of the Double House," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60.2 (2009): 233–45.

⁴ Frances Andrews, *The Early Humiliati* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁵ Rolando Dondarini, *Bologna medievale nella storia delle città* (Bologna: Pàtron, 2000), 140–4.

1. Santa Cristina
2. San Colombano
3. Santi Gervasio e Protasio
4. Santa Margherita
5. Santi Vitale e Agricola
6. Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia
7. Santa Caterina
8. Santissima Trinità di Ronzano

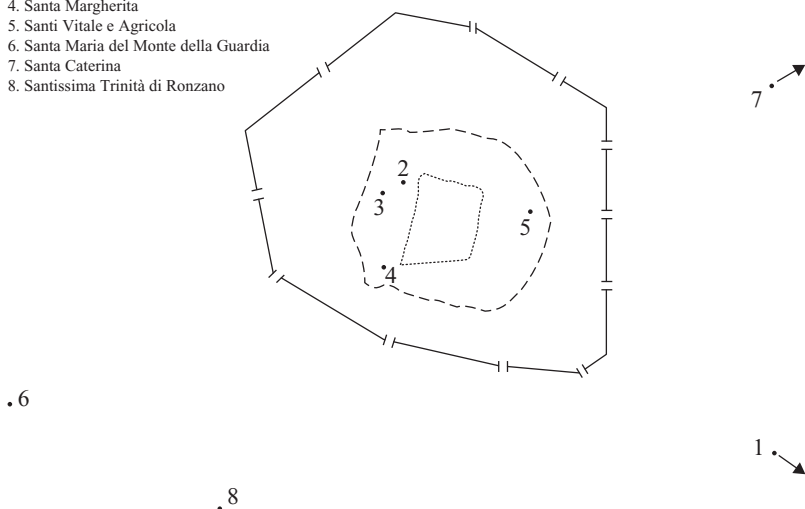


Figure 1.1 Nunneries in Bologna, 1215

Nearly all of the religious establishments within this circle are parish churches; the Celestines established the only monastery in this zone in 1358.⁶

The Bolognese built the second wall, later called the *cerchia penultima*, while they fought as a member of the Lombard League against Frederick Barbarossa in the twelfth century. The wall built at this time may have been a reconstruction of an earlier fortification.⁷ In the area between the first and second walls, there were only four nunneries, all of which existed at the time of the wall's construction (see Figure 1.1). At least fourteen communities of religious men were also in this circle, including the prestigious abbey of Santo Stefano.

⁶ Augusto Vasina, "Chiesa e comunità dei fedeli nella diocesi di Bologna dal XII al XV secolo," in *Storia della Chiesa di Bologna*, ed. Paolo Prodi and Lorenzo Paolini, 2 vols. (Bologna: Istituto per la Storia della Chiesa di Bologna, and Bergamo: Edizioni Bolis, 1997), 1: 133.

⁷ Dondarini, *Bologna medievale*, 146–50.

Though some of these monasteries existed when the walls were built, others established themselves in this area after the city had expanded in the thirteenth century. By contrast, no nunneries were founded in this area after the next circle of walls was built, indicating that women religious did not have the economic resources to acquire property for nunneries in the more sought-after urban center, or could not get permission from parish priests to establish communities in this area.

The Bolognese began construction of the last perimeter, called the *circla* or the *cerchia ultima*, as a moat with a wooden barrier (*palancato*) during the Second Lombard League's battle against Emperor Frederick II in the mid thirteenth century. They reinforced it with stone during the fourteenth century, leaving sections of the barrier open during construction.⁸ The vast majority of urban nunneries and houses of religious men existed inside this perimeter.⁹ In addition, several nunneries were located just outside the gates in this outermost wall, a number reaching sixteen at its peak in 1300. At a distance from the city gates were a few religious houses, mostly founded in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

WOMEN'S MONASTERIES IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

By the late twelfth century, Bologna and the surrounding area were home to six nunneries, four of which were independent Benedictine houses located inside the area encompassed by the second ring of walls. The two remaining convents were Camaldolese, a Benedictine Order in which monks could live in eremitic or semi-eremitic communities but in which nuns lived in traditional cenobitic monasteries. In the early years of the order, these communities were usually located at a distance from city centers. Founded sometime around

⁸ Dondarini, *Bologna medievale*, 150–5.

⁹ Vasina, "Chiesa e comunità," 135.

the turn of the twelfth century, the first Camaldolese convent in Bologna, Santa Cristina di Settifonti, followed this convention and built its monastery about twelve miles from town.¹⁰ In the late twelfth century, the second group of Camaldolese nuns, Santa Maria di Biliemme, established its community at a short distance from the city's perimeter, a location that would be just outside walls that would be built later in the thirteenth century.

The early histories of these houses are difficult to reconstruct. Two of the Benedictine houses were suppressed in the fourteenth century and while a few remaining records can be found in the archives of other monastic houses, most of the documents are lost. In the fifteenth century, Santa Maria di Biliemme merged with another Camaldolese house, Sant'Anna, and the combined community disappeared soon afterward. The records of the remaining two Benedictine houses, Santa Margherita and Santi Vitale e Agricola, suggest that the communities remained small. Taking Santa Margherita as an example, the community seems to have been comprised of a small number of nuns, varying between five and ten in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, with both lay men and women also listed as part of the community. The early documents are all records of extended leases, with all members of the community – both nuns and lay members – meeting in the chapter to give their consent to these agreements.¹¹ In addition to representing an older form of monasticism, this small number of houses with limited membership could neither accommodate the number of women who would seek the

¹⁰ Craig Monson, *Divas in the Convent: Nuns, Music and Defiance in 17th-Century Italy* (University of Chicago Press, 2012), 31. Monson notes that by tradition, the convent was founded in 1097, but the earliest papal recognition of the convent dates to 1125.

¹¹ A *locazione enfiteotica* (long-term lease) from 1213 lists ten nuns, three *conversi*, four *converse*, and one *sindico* consenting to the agreement. In 1221, six nuns, six *converse*, and four *conversi* (including one serving as *sindico*) agreed to a similar lease. See Archivio di Stato Bologna, Fondo Demaniale (henceforth ASB Dem.), S. Margarita, 1/3868, nos. 8–9.

religious life in the thirteenth century nor satisfy the desire for an increased variety of forms of religious life.

HERMITESSES IN BOLOGNA

In Bologna, the formation of small ascetic communities in the hills outside of town is visible in the historical record in the years around 1200. Stories of earlier manifestations of these groups before their official foundations as monastic institutions may reflect the existence of less formal communities earlier in the twelfth century. For example, the hermitage of Santa Maria del Monte was founded on the Osservanza hill in the early twelfth century. According to tradition, a noble woman named Picciola Galluzi established the community, though there is little evidence concerning the early years of the church.¹² By 1205, Pope Innocent III extended papal protection to the small hermitage. Similarly, another noble woman named Cremenina Piatessi founded a small community in the 1140s that would eventually take a more institutional form as the monastery of Santissima Trinità di Ronzano in the first decade of the thirteenth century.¹³ Most of our knowledge of the early years of these communities is the product of later accounts, which were perhaps efforts to establish a longer history for these churches, along with connections to a noble family. Nevertheless, these legends suggest that there may have been small groups of religious women living as hermitesses in the hills south of Bologna in the twelfth century.

Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia began its existence as an oratory for a hermitess named Angelica, who was initially affiliated with a nearby group of canons at the church of Santa Maria di

¹² Paola Foschi, "Gli ordini religiosi medievali a Bologna e nel suo territorio," in *Storia della Chiesa di Bologna*, ed. Prodi and Paolini, 2: 477.

¹³ Foschi, "Gli ordini religiosi," 2: 479.

Reno e San Salvatore, known locally as the Renani canons. Details of Angelica's family origin are frustratingly sparse. She must have come from a wealthy family, since she had an endowment of 1,000 Bolognese lire to support her. Eventually, Angelica was served by a different group of canons living at Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia's church. Only after the death of the hermitess did the church become a convent for nuns.

Some later accounts claim that older cousins named Azzolina and Beatrice Guezi were Angelica's predecessors, living on the mountain as early as 1143. In these accounts, the small group of religious women were guardians of a image of the Madonna and Child that had been painted by Saint Luke and brought to Bologna by a holy pilgrim; indeed, the nunnery would in later years possess an icon that became a focus for the city's civic piety, giving the nunnery that grew from Angelica's oratory a privileged position.¹⁴ Other narratives of the community's history claim that Angelica and another hermitess named Angela lived on the Monte della Guardia as early as the late eleventh century.¹⁵ These stories may indicate that the Monte della Guardia was the site of communities of hermitesses before Angelica, but there is no extant contemporary evidence of these foundations. In the mid twelfth century, the canons of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia refer to Angelica as their foundress, and in the late twelfth century, the nuns seeking to confirm a papal privilege also point to Angelica as the foundress and do not attempt to argue for a longer history of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia.

Angelica used an endowment from her family to build an oratory on the Monte della Guardia. Overseeing the endowment and

¹⁴ Giuseppe Gozzadini, *Cronaca di Ronzano e memorie di Loderingo d'Andalò, Frate Gaudente* (Bologna: Società Tipografica Bolognese, 1851), 79–80, no. 4.

¹⁵ Giovambattista Melloni, *Atti o memorie degli uomini illustri in santità nati o morti in Bologna*, ed. A. Benati and M. Fanti (Rome: Multigrafica editrice, 1971), 351.

Angelica's hermitage were the Renani canons. The group was probably founded around the year 1100, but the first extant records date to 1136. They had previously been members of the cathedral chapter, but decided to found a settlement on the guard hills. The earliest records are "a series of privileges from Archbishop Gualtiero of Ravenna, from bishop Enrico of Bologna, and from Pope Innocent II, with which the new congregation was exempted from paying tithes and was placed at the head of a series of churches in the countryside."¹⁶ Thus Angelica's foundation would have been one of several churches over which they had oversight.

In August 1193, Celestine III wrote to Bishop Gerardo of Bologna to advise him that he had granted the hermitess Angelica permission to build an oratory in honor of the Virgin Mary.¹⁷ The pope confirmed an agreement between Angelica and the canons in March 1194, and in May of that year the bishop laid the first stone of Angelica's church. The record of the event lists fourteen witnesses by name and mentions that there were others present. If Angelica attended the groundbreaking, she is not one of the named witnesses.¹⁸

Celestine's involvement in the founding of Angelica's church indicates that he took an interest in her endeavors. The special relationship between the pope and the oratory was confirmed in 1197 when Celestine explicitly extended the protection of the Holy See to Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia and all of its property.

¹⁶ "una serie di privilegi, dell'archivescovo di Ravenna Gualtiero, del vescovo di Bologna Enrico, del Papa Innocenzo II, con i quali la nuova congregazione veniva esentata dal pagamento delle decime e veniva posta a capo di una serie di chiese del contado." Foschi, "Gli ordini religiosi," 2: 474.

¹⁷ "Cum A[n]gelica mulier ad honorem beate virginis marie in loco qui dicitur mons guardie oratorium ex devotione duxerit construendum, nobis humiliter supplicavit quatenus ad consumandum pietatis opus primarium lapidem ipsius fabrice fundamento auctoritate apostolice iaciendum concedere deberemus quorum desiderio et petitioni acquiescentes."

ASB Dem., San Mattia, 2/5763, no. 3.

¹⁸ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 2/5763, no. 4.

The bull also exempted the church from episcopal jurisdiction. The following year, the new pope, Innocent III, confirmed the acts of his predecessor, also mentioning that the archdeacon and cathedral canons of Bologna agreed to the exemption.¹⁹

In 1204, there were already signs of tension between Angelica and the canons of Maria di Reno. The main issue was the number of priests that were to celebrate the divine office in Angelica's chapel. The hermitess maintained that she was promised two priests, but the canons considered this excessive. Innocent III wrote to Lanfranc, a cathedral canon and also to Azo, abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Santo Stefano, one of the oldest monasteries in Bologna. His letter provided them with details of the quarrel between the two parties. The two sides had appeared before a subdeacon to present their cases, and this judge had ruled that the canons were required to provide two priests to Angelica. Both priests returned to the chapel and made an oath that they would only stay for eight days, after which they left the chapel again. When Angelica complained of this, the prior and canons argued that two priests were to serve in the last days before her death, but until then, only one was required. They further complained that the endowment she brought with her was insufficient to cover the costs of the chapel and her own maintenance, and that the revenues from the endowment had gone to alms and oblations. Their expenditure on the chapel, they claimed, exceeded 100 pounds. Innocent charged the addressees of the letter to investigate whether the grant of two priests was absolute. When the *sindico* of the canons appeared before Abbot Azo of Santo Stefano,

¹⁹ "Ea propter dilecta in Christo filia venerabilis fratris nostri G[erardi] episcopi et dilectorum filiorum archidiaconi et capituli Bononiensis precibus annuentis ecclesiam Sancte Marie di Monte de Gardia tuo studio fabricatam a iursidictione ipsius episcopi et successorum eius et ecclesie Bononiensis eximimus et ad exemplar bone memorie C[elestini] pape predecessoris nostri apostolice protectionis presidio communimus." ASB Dem., San Mattia, 2/5763, no. 10.

the abbot confirmed a previous opinion promulgated by the abbot of another monastery, stating that Angelica's chapel had indeed been promised two priests.²⁰ The canons renounced their suit and both parties promised to live by the terms of the agreement.

By 1206, however, the dispute arose again. This time representatives of the canons appeared before the abbot of San Felice. They asked for eight days to send a canon and a *converso* to Rome to renounce their ties to Angelica's church. The abbot instead gave them fifteen days to come to an accord with Angelica and threatened them with excommunication if they were not able to do so. Two chamberlains and the *sindico* of San Salvatore were ordered to appear before the abbot of San Felice on February 5, but they did not appear.²¹ Unfortunately, the convent record does not contain information on the fate of the canons. However, later disputes make it clear that the two houses maintained an affiliation, although this is the last document with information about this particular matter.

By 1210, it must have been increasingly clear that the interests of Angelica and the canons of Santa Maria were not compatible, and each side began to protect the property they believed was their due. In 1210, Innocent commissioned the cathedral canon Otto to investigate Angelica's complaint that the canons of Santa Maria di Reno had stolen movable goods from her. In March of that year, Angelica and representatives of Santa Maria di Reno appeared before a group of judges in the canons' cloister to present a lawsuit and countersuit. The prior and the *sindico* of the canons asked that Angelica return several pieces of land, including a house next to the church of Santa Maria del Monte. They also asked for all their oblations of the last sixteen years, which they estimated to be worth

²⁰ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 2/5763, nos. 14–15.

²¹ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 2/5763, no. 16.

100 Bolognese lire. In addition they requested to be reimbursed their expenses of the last sixteen years, which they thought to be worth 100 imperial lire. They placed the value of the usufruct of the land for the past sixteen years at 100 Bolognese lire. Finally, they asked to have other furnishings and agricultural equipment replaced or to be paid for the loss of them.²²

In Angelica's counterclaim, she referred again to the suits concerning the services of priests. She claimed that according to the opinion of the abbot of San Felice, she owed nothing, since priests from Santa Maria di Reno were supposed to perform the divine offices at her church but did not. She also claimed that the priests absconded with various items. Among these items were several bushels of produce, a missal, an antiphonary, and bound copies of the gospels and epistles. She asked that these things be returned or paid for. In addition, she asked for reimbursement for the cost of carrying on the lawsuit, including expenses for trips to Rome for her and a servant, which she estimated at 66 Bolognese pounds. Finally, she asked for the return of her dowry, which she estimated at 1,000 Bolognese pounds. The case must have been decided in Angelica's favor, for in December of that year the canons gave Angelica five pieces of land.²³

By the 1220s, it was clear that Angelica's church had its own group of canons. The church records do not indicate whether these were canons who broke from Santa Maria di Reno, nor do they tell when the priests began to consider the church their home. As early as 1209, a prior named Pietro acted on behalf of the church in land purchases; there is no indication of what if any role he played in the 1210 dispute between Angelica and Santa Maria di Reno; he may have served mainly as a procurator for legal and financial matters.²⁴

²² ASB Dem., San Mattia, 52/5813, no. 4.

²³ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 52/5813, no. 4.

²⁴ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 2/5763, no. 19.

A bull addressed to Angelica from Pope Honorius III in 1222 renews and confirms the privileges of the church but makes no mention of a prior, convent, or any brothers.²⁵ In 1229, however, Pope Gregory IX wrote to the prior and brothers of the church of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, extending papal protection to them and placing them under the rule of Saint Augustine.

The settlement of the suit with the Renani canons and the establishment of a group of canons in her own church provided Angelica with the basic temporal and spiritual needs. Her church continued to acquire property over the next several years. The efforts of Angelica and her canons turned to gaining periodic reaffirmation of their papal privilege in order to assert their community's exemption from episcopal jurisdiction. By the time of Angelica's death in the 1240s, the dwindling number of canons led Bishop Ottavio of Bologna to transfer three sisters from Santissima Trinità di Ronzano to the church.²⁶

SANTA CATERINA DI QUARTO AND ITS CONGREGATION

While Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia was a community founded by a hermitess that also housed a community of Augustinian canons, this seems to have been a practical arrangement that was not part of a longer-term plan to establish a religious group comprised of both men and women. By contrast, the founders of Santa Caterina di Quarto established a community in which the participation of men and women was an integral part of the plan from its early years.

²⁵ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 52/5813, not numbered, dated July 1, 1222.

²⁶ Gozzadini, *Cronaca di Ronzano*, 130. The document contained in Gozzadini regarding this matter is probably the same as ASB Dem., San Mattia, 52/5813, no. 8, which is lost.

In 1205, a group of men and women gathered in the episcopal palace in Bologna to bless the first stone that was to be used in the building of a church “in honor of God, the Virgin Mary and Santa Caterina and all the saints.”²⁷ The group included priests and laymen, men and women. The three main actors mentioned were Verardo, Alberto, and Bianco, who gave the first stone to be blessed for the building of the church. Present as witnesses were the archpriest of the parish church in Marano, just outside of Bologna; Alberto, priest of the church of Santa Maria at the Porta Ravenata, the northeast gate of Bologna; as well as the laymen Bonmarcino Medici and Amerigo, whose last name is not given. Also present was a woman named Adelasia, who would become the first *magistra* of Santa Caterina’s female inhabitants. Though the bishop of Bologna, Gerardo, is not listed as one of the witnesses, the record of the event says that the bishop had received a letter from Pope Innocent III notifying him of the new foundation.²⁸ A year later, several of these same people met at Santa Maria di Porta Ravenata to confirm the donation of the land. In this case, Bianco Bianchi donated two pieces of land, one on which the church was being built and one nearby, “for the remedy of his soul and those of his ancestors.”²⁹ The prior of the church, Alberto, received the land “on behalf of the aforementioned church of Santa Caterina and the brothers and sisters who dwell there now and in the future.”³⁰

²⁷ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 1/4485, no. 5, “ad honorem dei, sancte marie virginis et sancte catelline et omnium sanctorum.”

²⁸ Relations between Innocent III and Gerardo were strained; in 1202, Gerardo had refused a papal request to dedicate an altar, and there were other conflicts throughout Gerardo’s episcopate. Vasina, “Chiesa e comunità,” 1: 121.

²⁹ “pro remedio anime sue et parentum suorum.” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 1/4485, no. 6.

³⁰ “pro predicta ecclesia sancta Catherine et fratribus et sororibus ibi commorantibus presentibus et futuris.” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 1/4485, no. 6.

Little is known about Alberto. He may have been a friend of Saint Dominic, though he did not join his own foundation to Dominic's growing movement. Theodoric of Apolda places Alberto at Dominic's funeral in his account of the saint's life. The story emphasizes the closeness of Alberto and Dominic. After comforting the mourning friars, Alberto approached Dominic's remains and embraced the dead saint, who at that point appeared to Alberto in a vision, revealing to him that he would follow the saint to Christ in that very year.³¹ Thus Alberto's reputation as a holy man merited his inclusion in Dominic's *Vita*.

The church grew and also apparently enjoyed the favor of Innocent III, who in 1213 asked the bishops of Parma, Reggio, and Modena to donate whatever money they took in from the feast of San Vitale to help the nascent church.³² An indulgence from 1240 shows the diocesan clergy's positive evaluation of the rapidly growing community. Ottaviano, the archdeacon and future bishop of Bologna, addressed his indulgence to the clergy and faithful of Bologna and encouraged them to visit the foundation and give alms.

We believe that this is known to all of you, either by reputation or by sight. We notify you . . . that in the church of Santa Caterina in the diocese of Bologna a great multitude of men and women are gathered to serve God. They serve God in true religion and in the greatest poverty . . . Persevering in prayers day and night, they strive to implore the mercy of the Lord for themselves and for all sinners. Indeed, the light of the good works they do shines before humanity in such a way that many men and women, seeing their good works, glorify the Father who is in heaven.³³

³¹ Theodoric of Apolda, "S. Dominicus conf. Bononiae, Acta Ampliora," *Acta Sanctorum*, 67 vols. (Antwerp, 1641–1940), Aug. 1, Dies 4, col. 603c.

³² ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 1/4485, no. 8.

³³ "Omnibus vobis fere pro fama ut pro visum credimus esse notum. Nos vobis . . . notificamus quod magna multitudo virorum et mulierum congregata est ad serviendum deo in ecclesia sancte catherine bononiensis episcopatus qui creatori nostro in vera religione ac maxima paupertate serviunt . . . [P]erseverantes in orationibus diebus

As the reputation of the community grew, other groups sought to place themselves under Santa Caterina's authority and a small congregation of houses began to emerge. The houses that affiliated with Santa Caterina were varied, including groups that were comprised of only men or only women, as well as communities with inhabitants of both sexes. These groups were located in towns such as Brescia and Cremona, in which the Humiliati had a significant presence, and based on location and other elements of practice (such as the titles held by the male and female leaders of these communities) it is probable that there is some overlap between the Humiliati movement and Santa Caterina's congregation.

The Humiliati movement comprised groups that can be difficult to define. Historically, their dedication to poverty and preaching has been emphasized, as has their condemnation along with the Waldensians in the 1184 decree *Ad abolendam* and their re-integration into the church under Pope Innocent III. Their geographical focus was in northern Italy, particularly in Lombardy. Recent research has demonstrated that communities that can be categorized as Humiliati took a number of forms. Some retained the favor of local church leaders during the period of their excommunication. Moreover, for several decades after they were welcomed back into the church, they continued to exhibit substantial variation in practice. Some of this diversity figured into their official rules. Innocent III divided the Humiliati into a first order of canons and canonesses governed by priors, a second order of lay men and women living a common life who were governed by officials called *ministri*, and a third order of

et noctibus student pro se ac pro cunctis peccatoribus domini misericordiam implorare. Denique lux bonorum operum que faciunt lucet coram hominibus ita quod multi tam viri quam mulieres videntes eorum opera glorificant patrem qui in celis est." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 3/4487, no. 14.

lay men and women following the general practices of the others but living with their families.³⁴

Frances Andrews has shown that in practice, many Humiliati houses continued to follow the customs that their individual communities had developed before Innocent's rule, retaining many elements of local identity. Thus, though Innocent established the Humiliati as a religious order in 1201, it is difficult to find a sense of unified identity in the first half of the thirteenth century. In general, the movement included communities that were dedicated to ascetic living and prayer.³⁵

One member of Santa Caterina's congregation that shows some signs of similarity with the Humiliati was its first daughter house, San Giacomo della Mella in Brescia. On October 29, 1225, Bishop Alberto of Brescia gathered with nine canons of that church and, with their consent, placed them under the temporal and spiritual authority of Ugo, the prior of Santa Caterina, giving him and his successors the right of visitation, correction, and instruction, saving only the authority of the bishop himself.³⁶ Though eventually there would be women among the inhabitants of San Giacomo, at this point there is no mention of their presence. Four days later, a group of friars of the Order of Preachers in Brescia met at San Giacomo to send to the bishop their acknowledgement that the church and all of its goods were now under the authority of the prior of Santa Caterina.³⁷

The letter from the Friar Preachers raises the possibility that San Giacomo or some of its inhabitants had been affiliated with the Humiliati movement. In their efforts to continue Innocent III's

³⁴ Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, 33–40.

³⁵ Andrews, *The Early Humiliati*, 136–71.

³⁶ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 2/4486, no. 11.

³⁷ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 2/4486, no. 12.

program of organizing Humiliati communities into an order, Popes Honorius III and Gregory IX appointed visitors for the Humiliati, many of whom were Dominican friars.³⁸ The friars' supervision was part of the attempt to ascertain that Humiliati communities either followed Innocent III's rule or submitted to the authority of another order. It is not possible to determine San Giacomo's relationship to the Humiliati movement definitively, and this difficulty is exacerbated by the decentralized nature of the Humiliati. Nevertheless, Dominican oversight similar to the kind that they exercised over Humiliati communities is suggestive.

By 1250, there were both men and women in San Giacomo though there is no indication of the proportional population of either group. At that time, the prior of San Giacomo, brother Geminiano, issued his resignation to prior Alberto of Santa Caterina.³⁹ Two years later when San Giacomo chose a new prior named brother Giacomo, they notified the prior of Santa Caterina, a man named Geminiano. Whether this is the same Geminiano who had resigned as prior of the daughter house is unknown, but the coincidence of names raises the possibility that Santa Caterina attracted members from its daughter houses and that those members could rise to the rank of prior. In 1252, Geminiano and others traveled from Santa Caterina to Brescia to oversee the investiture of the new prior, placing a book in the hands of brother Giacomo, who then placed his hands into Geminiano's as a sign of obedience.⁴⁰

In 1262, Santa Caterina asserted its authority over San Giacomo on the occasion of the election of a new prior. On March 6 of that year, Geminiano, still prior of Santa Caterina, arrived at San Giacomo to confirm the election of Amadeo. It appears that the prior

³⁸ Andrews, *The Early Humiliati*, 203–4.

³⁹ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 4/4488, no. 7.

⁴⁰ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 4/4488, no. 14.

had already been sworn into office by the bishop's vicar general. Claiming that he wanted to follow tradition and avoid innovation, Amadeo renounced the confirmation he had received from the vicar general and was re-invested with the office of prior at the hands of Geminiano.⁴¹ This ceremony involved "singing and saying 'Te Deum Laudemus,' having rung the bells and invoked the grace of the Holy Spirit."⁴² After his confirmation, Geminiano ordered that all the brothers and sisters should make manual obedience (*fecerunt obedientiam manualement*) to Amadeo, and had their names listed on the record of the confirmation. The record of this event provides a picture of the monastery's population. Those who pledged obedience to Amadeo were three priests, six lay brothers, and twenty-six sisters, including the *magistra*, Patientia.⁴³ Amadeo resigned his charge nine years later, and there are no records in Santa Caterina's archives to indicate whether he was replaced.

In the 1230s, two other communities placed themselves under the authority of Santa Caterina. The first was the Ospedale of Santa Maria di Misericordia in Ferrara. In this case, a group of women appeared before the bishop of Ferrara in 1233 "saying that they

⁴¹ "Frater Amadeus filius quondam domini ardrici de guxiagio electus in priorem . . . ecclesie. Renuntiavit in manibus fratris geminiani prioris sancte caterine diocesis bononiensis confirmationem quam receperat de dicta electione a domino zamboldo canonico brixienis vicario generali domini C episcopi brixienis quam renuntiationem dictus prior sancte caterine recepit nomini e vice supradicte domus sancte caterine . . . Tali modo et ordine dictus frater Amadeus fecit predictam renuntiationem quod propter hoc non fiat aliquid preiudicium fratribus et sororibus dicte domus sancti iacobi nisi secundum quod debet de iure. Et quod tamen dicto priori sancte caterine nomine domus sue quam subscriptis sororibus et fratribus consequitur ius suum salvum in omnibus. Ita quod per hoc nulla innovatio intelligatur facta." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 5/4489, no. 20.

⁴² "Cantando et dicendo te deum laudemus, pulsantibus campanis, et gratia sancti spiritus invocata." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 5/4489, no. 21.

⁴³ "Fratres Martinus, Petrus et Ottonellus prebyteri, et confratres Richardus, Benadux, Antelmus, Mayfredus, Gratiolus et Lafrancus; Sorores Patientia magistra, Febronia, Brixiana, Mabilia, Azzolina, Carabella, Cicilia, Renes, Meierata, Brixiana, Annoesa, Zoana, Crescimbene, Consolata, Bonasia, Fina, Herbabona, Bonaventura, Mansueta, Benevenuta, Biatrix, Bellacara, Agnes, Otta, Arigina, et Helena." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 5/4489, no. 21.

wanted to live chastely and to observe the rule of Santa Caterina.”⁴⁴ The bishop invested the prior of Santa Caterina with temporal and spiritual authority over the church and the hospital with the condition that the church should offer a pound of incense at the altar of the bishop’s chapel on the Feast of Saint George. Unfortunately, the records do not indicate whether the relationship between the two churches endured.

Similarly, in 1236, the ten friars of the church of San Nicolò in Bologna placed themselves under the governance of Santa Caterina, which was this time represented by a *converso* who also acted as procurator of the church.⁴⁵ The only other record besides the submission of San Nicolò to Santa Caterina is a document from 1289 having to do with the leadership of the church. In this case, San Nicolò’s leader, who is called the rector, had been elected to lead another church and the brothers of Santa Caterina are asked to choose a new rector, whom they confirm with the agreement of the two brothers left at San Nicolò.⁴⁶

A final member of the congregation reinforces the possibility that there was overlap between Santa Caterina’s congregation and the Humiliati. Santa Maria di Valverde in Cremona placed itself under the authority of Santa Caterina’s prior in 1255. The charter in which the brothers and sisters pledged their allegiance to Santa Caterina and its prior, Geminiano, alternately refers to Geminiano as prior, rector, and *minister*, in addition to calling the leader of the thirteen sisters a *ministra*. Only three brothers were present at the time, though reference is made to others who were absent. The use of the titles suggests that Santa Maria di Valverde may have been part of the Humiliati movement. Though there is no way to be certain, it is

⁴⁴ “Dicentes que volebant caste vivere et regulam sanctae catherinae ibidem observare.” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 3/4487, no. 1.

⁴⁵ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 3/4487, no. 7.

⁴⁶ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 7/4491, no. 5.

also possible that the same was true of Santa Caterina, especially in light of its formation just a few years after the compromise between the Humiliati and Innocent III.

As it gained daughter houses, Santa Caterina continued to thrive, and by 1259 there were over ninety inhabitants, including sixty sisters. However, changes to its rule and life lay around the corner. Santa Caterina's inhabitants followed neither the Augustinian nor the Benedictine Rule, and they had not gained papal approval for their own rule. Reforms beginning in the late 1240s and continuing into the first years of the fourteenth century would eventually lead Santa Caterina to become an Augustinian nunnery in the fourteenth century, then to be integrated into the Dominican Order in the late fifteenth century. These changes would also lead to some confusion about the obligations and observances of its daughter houses.⁴⁷ The fortunes of Santa Caterina and its congregation demonstrate the fluid nature of monastic life in the thirteenth century. It began as a community of religious men and women and gained sufficient influence that it came to be regarded as the head of its own small order. In this way, it was a part of the religious movement that gave birth to more successful orders such as the Franciscans and Dominicans. The lack of an approved rule and the inclusion of both men and women in a single community made it the target of reforming popes and bishops.

SANTISSIMA TRINITÀ DI RONZANO

In contrast to the substantial extant records regarding the foundation of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia and Santa Caterina, information on the early years of Santissima Trinità di Ronzano is sparse

⁴⁷ See Chapter 4, pp. 108–12 and Chapter 5, pp. 182–92.

because of the destruction of records in a fire in the fifteenth century.⁴⁸ There is disagreement on the founding date of Santissima Trinità di Ronzano. Raimondina Piatesi established the church of Santissima Trinità in 1209, though as with Angelica some accounts credit an older relative, Cremonina Piatesi, with founding a small community of hermitesses as early as 1140.⁴⁹ It is also difficult to gain information about the early inhabitants, though scholars believe that the community included both men and women.⁵⁰ The inhabitants of Santissima Trinità lived in the hills of Bologna to the southwest, farther from the city than Santa Maria del Monte or the Renani canons. The monastery was part of the congregation of San Marco of Mantua and followed its rule.⁵¹ Between 1239 and 1265, several small groups of women left Santissima Trinità to establish or repopulate other nunneries.

In May 1239, Villana di Calderini and at least two other sisters left Santissima Trinità to establish the nunnery of San Giovanni Battista in the southwestern suburbs of Bologna. Several witnesses gathered to place the first stone for a monastery at that site. Present as witnesses were Buonmartino, a *converso* of Santa Caterina and the *sindico* of that church; Guido di Venetico who was acting in place of the papal notary Gregorio di Monte Longo; the papal penitentiary Stefano; Angelo of Venice of the Order of Preachers and Villana, who would become the prioress of the nunnery.⁵² At this time, the new monastery followed the Rule of San Marco.

⁴⁸ Gozzadini, *Cronaca di Ronzano*, 11.

⁴⁹ Melloni, *Atti o memorie*, 389–93; Gabriella Zarri, “I monasteri femminili di Bologna tra il XIII e il XVII secolo,” in *Atti e memorie della deputazione di storia patria per le province di Romagna* 24 (1973): 215–16.

⁵⁰ Foschi, “Gli ordini religiosi,” 2: 479; Zarri, “Monasteri femminili,” 217.

⁵¹ Melloni suggests that the Rule of San Marco di Mantua called for absolute poverty, eschewing any possession of property, but it is clear from the dispute over Villana, Elisabeth, and Francesca Calderini’s dowry that, if the rule did call for this form of poverty, the community did not adhere to this provision. Melloni, *Atti o memorie*, 393–4.

⁵² ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 3/4487, no. 11.

In 1247, Villana and her sisters, Elisabeth and Francesca, sued their former monastery, Santissima Trinità di Ronzano, for the property that their father Dominic the Notary had left them. The hearing took place in the *parlatorio* of the sisters of Santissima Trinità. The judge in this case was Stefano the Penitentiary, who decided that the sisters should have the property left to them by their father. Dominic also had a son named Bartolomeo, who is referred to both as their “*frater carnalis*” and also as “*frater Bartolomeus*,” indicating that he had also been a member of Santissima Trinità. Bartolomeo’s land stayed with the canons.⁵³ Though it is impossible to be certain without an extant copy of the will, it is probable that the land was the sisters’ dowry for entry into the monastery and was meant to cover their expenses. This transaction elucidates the dotal practices for women religious. In many cases, a woman in a monastery had usufruct of the land given by her family for her support. Many times when one sister died, another family member would take her place. Though the land was technically a donation to the monastery, it stayed in the control of the family. When a nun or sister transferred from one monastery to another, she was often able to bring her property and its profits with her.

A second colony of canonesses left Santissima Trinità in 1249 to move to Angelica’s church. Upon their move, they were given the Rule of Saint Augustine to follow, as the two remaining clerics in that church did. Soon afterward, they established a suburban nunnery named San Mattia. The final group of sisters would leave Santissima Trinità in the mid 1260s, after which the church was turned over to a military order called the Frati Gaudenti. In the late years of the 1240s, San Giovanni Battista and Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, now single-sex houses, would assume the Rule of Saint Augustine,

⁵³ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 3/4487, no. 31.

as would the brothers and sisters of Santa Caterina. Over the next several decades, many of them would come into some relationship with the Dominican Order, by far the strongest in Bologna because of Dominic's presence there during his life and in death.⁵⁴

CONCLUSIONS

Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, Santissima Trinità di Ronzano, and Santa Caterina di Quarto all differed from traditional monastic establishments, demonstrating the diversity of religious establishments arising during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. All three of them were established at a distance from the city. Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia began as a retreat for a hermitess around which a community of canons also formed, and though Santissima Trinità di Ronzano's early history is murkier than those of its counterparts, it is likely that a similar pattern occurred there. Santa Caterina di Quarto was established by an itinerant preacher, and became the mother house of a small congregation, which included some double houses and some single-sex communities. As is demonstrated by the fate of some of the "colonies" that left Santissima Trinità, including the group who settled at Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, over time these groups would all come to adhere to more widely known rules and would integrate into monastic orders. Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, Santa Caterina di Quarto, and the houses formed by residents of Santissima Trinità di Ronzano would all become nunneries in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

Santa Caterina di Quarto and houses such as Santissima Trinità di Ronzano following the Rule of San Marco of Mantua were still

⁵⁴ For more on these trends, see Chapter 3.

in the early stages of developing their identity when expectations about what monastic houses looked like shifted. Santa Caterina maintained elements of its own rule into the late thirteenth century, and there is some indication that they continued to see themselves as the head of their own order into the fourteenth century, but this uniqueness was increasingly difficult to maintain, and along with other religious communities founded before the Fourth Lateran Reforms, over time they came to resemble other, more traditional houses of religious women. As we shall see in Chapter 3, over the course of the later Middle Ages, the communities that emerged from these three foundations would integrate into the Dominican Order.

New religious orders

A significant theme in scholarship on religious women in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is the question of their participation in new religious groups such as the Order of Citeaux, the Order of Preachers, and the orders associated with the Franciscan movement. Some of the issues involved in this area of inquiry are the problem of the *cura monialium* in the High and late Middle Ages, tracing both conflict and cooperation between nuns and the monks or friars in their order. Adding more complexity to this picture, a relatively recent development is greater attention to the role of the papacy in shaping religious life in the thirteenth century, especially its use of the models of Clare of Assisi's San Damiano and the Dominican community of San Sisto as organizing forces for diverse groups of religious women. As Maria Pia Alberzoni has noted, "At times it seems that we are confronted with a play in which the actors – the sisters, the friars and the papal curia – move in a manner which is difficult to decipher and could even be described as contradictory."¹

Even among communities of religious women that were aligned with these new orders, the nature of the relationship to the order as

¹ Alberzoni, "Jordan of Saxony," 1. On the role of church leaders such as Hugolino of Ostia (later Pope Gregory IX) in organizing communities of religious women under the auspices of the Franciscan movement, see also Luigi Pellegrini, "Female Religious Experience and Society in Thirteenth-Century Italy," in *Monks & Nuns, Saints & Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society*, ed. Sharon Farmer and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

an institutional structure could vary from house to house and could change over time within the same convent. The role of incorporation – that is, the agreement of the decision-making body of the monastic order to take both spiritual and temporal responsibility for care and oversight of a monastic house – has posed a problem in the understanding of the status of religious women’s communities. Some convents were either clearly founded as part of a centralized religious order or were able to gain incorporation into that order quickly. This status meant that the house was exempt from the bishop’s jurisdiction. Monks or friars of the order were generally responsible for visitations and other forms of supervision, though they were not always reliable sources of continuing religious care. Depending on privileges granted to the order as a whole, these houses could claim exemptions from levies imposed by diocesan clergy and could sometimes successfully argue for relief from other forms of local taxation. In legal matters, they were subject only to the Papal See or its designated representatives. Besides the convents that were officially incorporated into an order and enjoyed its privileges, there were others that observed the rules and statutes of the order and may have dressed in its habit, but remained under the authority of the bishop.

Recently, scholars have explored this relationship of incorporated and unincorporated convents to the governing structures of religious orders, and have also assessed how the local lay community categorized these houses. In her study of Cistercian houses in England, Elizabeth Freeman argues that while only two convents were officially incorporated into the order, at least twenty claimed Cistercian identity, and seem to have been accepted as Cistercian convents by their lay neighbors. Similarly, Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner has drawn distinctions between nuns who primarily followed the Rule of Saint Augustine but were designated as “under the care of the

Friars Preachers” while remaining under the bishop’s jurisdiction, and those that were under Dominican jurisdiction and followed constitutions “inspired by the Dominican ethos.”² Even in the latter category, she notes that these constitutions could vary widely. Communities of religious women who considered themselves and who were considered by their neighbors to be part of centralized religious orders could vary widely in their practice, in their relationships to their male counterparts, and in their institutional status within the church.

This chapter will examine the role of centralized religious orders such as the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Cistercians in the foundation of new religious communities in the thirteenth century. I shall include houses founded in cooperation with the monks and friars of these orders and also those communities whose founders were inspired by these new orders but may not have worked directly with their leaders to establish new houses for religious women. For those houses with the closest connections to the Dominican, Franciscan, and Cistercian Orders, I shall examine their foundations, their paths to affiliation with their respective orders, and the dynamics of their continuing relationship with their male counterparts. Though there is only sparse evidence that would provide insight into the spiritual lives of these nuns, it is possible to examine their efforts to defend their status as part of the orders and to secure the *cura monialium* from their religious brethren.

It is important to continue the investigation of monastic women’s participation in religious orders beyond the contentious era of the mid thirteenth century, which until recently has been an ending point of studies examining the relationship between religious men

² Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner, “Dominican Order,” in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Margaret Schaus (London: Routledge and Taylor, 2006), 223.

and women in orders. For the most part, these houses in Bologna lack chronicles that would elucidate their spirituality and their relationship to other religious in the way that the German Sister-Books do. A partial exception is Sant'Agnese, which produced a chronicle of the convent's first decades and preserved a collection of letters sent from Jordan of Saxony to the convent's founder and first abbess, Diana d'Andalò. In the absence of such writings for other convents and for Sant'Agnese after the first few decades, a valuable source of insight into the development of the relationship between nuns and religious men – particularly in the mendicant orders – is the record of the ties of property that formed between men and women who participated in the same religious movement. The story of nuns' participation in religious orders has often focused on the reluctance of monks or friars to commit to the *cura monialium*, with the unwillingness to undertake the administrative and financial burden of caring for enclosed communities of religious women being an important source of the friars' concern. The examples of Bolognese nunneries that had a continuing relationship with monks and friars in centralized religious orders demonstrate that these administrative and financial concerns could also act as a means of forming important ties between religious men and women.

NEW FOUNDATIONS IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

There is no question that the arrival of new religious orders into Italian cities was an important development in urban religious life. It is useful, however, to look at general patterns of foundations in the thirteenth century to assess the extent to which the emergence of these new religious orders was the driving force in the growth in the number of women's monastic communities. Taking into account both convents that were incorporated into centralized

religious orders and those that were affiliated with these orders but remained under local jurisdiction, these houses still account for less than a third of the convents active in thirteenth-century Bologna. This period saw a substantial growth in the number of convents in Bologna and its surrounding area. In 1215, there were only seven houses that included religious women who professed a rule. By 1250, that number had grown to nineteen, and this rapid growth would continue until the last decade of the century, when we find thirty-five convents.³

Even taking the most expansive interpretation of affiliation with these monastic orders – that is, those that were incorporated into the order and those that described themselves as Cistercian, Franciscan, or Dominican without gaining official incorporation – very few convents originated with affiliations to these orders. Of the nineteen convents in Bologna in 1250, only three were affiliated with these new orders – Diana d’Andalò founded the Dominican Sant’Agnese in 1223 and, less than a decade later, the convent of San Francesco became the first house in Bologna from the Order of San Damiano. The Cistercian community of Santa Maria della Misericordia was founded around 1244; in papal and diocesan documents, it is consistently described as a Cistercian house, though it remained under the bishop’s jurisdiction.

Of the fifteen new communities founded in the second half of the thirteenth century, only one additional convent attained official incorporation into a centralized order, while another six were either founded with a looser affiliation to these orders or came to consider themselves part of these orders. Established in 1251, the Cistercian convent of Santa Maria del Cestello was incorporated

³ For an overview of the foundations and important events in the histories of nunneries in Bologna through the eighteenth century, see Zarri, “*Monasteri femminili*,” 133–224.

into the Cistercian Order by Pope Innocent IV the following year, and its incorporation was confirmed by the order in 1268.⁴ In February 1260, Pope Alexander IV approved the foundation of another convent described as Cistercian, San Guglielmo.⁵

The few Dominican and Clarissan communities founded in the second half of the thirteenth century are difficult to assess because of the paucity of documents from those houses in the early years of their histories. Though it was not incorporated into the order until the fifteenth century and was described as *sorores in habitu albo sub regula beati Augustini* in 1309, the naming of the community of San Pietro Martire after the Dominican Pietro da Verona suggests that they had a strong affinity with the Dominican Order from the beginning.⁶ Similarly, a small Clarissan community called the Eremitesse della Catena had formed by 1287, though it had vanished by the early years of the fourteenth century and has left little trace in the historical record.⁷ Some Augustinian houses began to form a closer relationship to the Order of Preachers; I shall examine this process in more detail in Chapter 3. Though new orders such as the Cistercians, Franciscans, and Dominicans were an important part of the religious movement in the High Middle Ages, the arrival of these orders in Bologna does not explain the rapid growth in the number of convents in the thirteenth century. The foundation of convents associated with new monastic orders was a numerically small but important element of religious life in the thirteenth century, and would become the norm in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

⁴ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 2/3244, nos. 5 and 11.

⁵ ASB Dem., San Guglielmo, 1/735, no. 3. I have not found evidence that this convent was incorporated into the Cistercian Order.

⁶ ASB Dem., San Pietro Martire, 34/2008, no. 2.

⁷ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 179–80.

COMPARISON WITH MILAN AND FLORENCE

A comparison of women's monasticism in Bologna and that of other Italian city-states such as Milan and Florence is instructive, suggesting that the diffusion of houses associated with new religious orders in Bologna is not unusual. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the seven nunneries in Milan were all Benedictine houses, some of which dated to the ninth century. In 1223, nuns from the Damianite house of Monticelli in Florence transferred to Milan to help found Santa Maria in Sant'Apollinare, which would grow large enough to found at least one additional Clarissan community at the end of the thirteenth century.⁸ Though three of the four convents that would be affiliated with the Order of Preachers by the fourteenth century had already been founded in the second half of the thirteenth century, all three of these began as Humiliati or Augustinian houses, and came into the Dominican sphere of influence over time.⁹

A variety of factors would lead to changes in the proportion of monastic houses that were affiliated in some way with these centralized orders over the course of the late Middle Ages. Significantly, many existing Benedictine or Augustinian convents would develop ties to these orders. As was the case with Bologna, it was relatively common for Augustinian houses to become associated with Dominican friars and thus to be increasingly affiliated with the Order of Preachers. One difference between the two cities was the Milanese phenomenon of both Augustinian and Benedictine houses becoming Clarissan convents in the fifteenth century, either because of the influence of Bernardino of Siena or from the intervention of Duchess

⁸ Enrico Cattaneo, "Istituzioni ecclesiastiche Milanesi," in *Storia di Milano*, ed. Giovanni Tracani degli Alfieri (Milan: Fondazione Trecanni degli Alfieri, 1961), 9: 628–9.

⁹ Cattaneo, "Istituzioni ecclesiastiche," 9: 616–21.

Bianca Maria Visconti, who led an effort to reform the life of several convents.

Though systematic information on Florentine nunneries in the thirteenth century would require an original study, there is substantial scholarship on Florentine religious life beginning in the fourteenth century, which can serve to provide comparisons to the monastic community in Bologna in the High and late Middle Ages.¹⁰ The work of George Dameron on Florence in the age of Dante and of David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber on the Florentine Catasto suggests that there were more communities of religious women in Florence than in Bologna – Dameron estimates that there were over sixty-six religious women's houses in 1330, though not all of these lived in formal monasteries.¹¹ Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber find twenty-seven convents within the city walls and twenty-one in suburban areas in 1427.¹²

In Sharon Strocchia's study of nuns in Florence from the mid fourteenth to the mid sixteenth century, she notes that while the number of houses of religious women in Bologna and Milan decreased in the fourteenth century, Florentines continued to establish convents in this era, with at least fourteen new convents established in and near the city between 1330 and 1340. She writes, "one of the most striking features of this upsurge was that only one new convent was a mendicant affiliate, in sharp contrast to numerous penitential groups inspired by mendicant ideals; the other new foundations followed the Benedictine or Augustinian Rule, which accommodated

¹⁰ Two studies that are especially useful are Richard Trexler, *The Women of Renaissance Florence* (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998), in particular pp. 6–30; and Sharon Strocchia, *Nuns and Nunneries in Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

¹¹ Strocchia, *Nuns and Nunneries*, 5; George Dameron, *Florence and its Church in the Age of Dante* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 47–51.

¹² David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1978), 157.

a wider range of organizational practices and spiritual objectives.”¹³ She explains that many families were reluctant to place their daughters in convents that followed the ascetic practices of the mendicant orders and that they also wanted to retain more influence over their daughters, which they might not be able to do in a convent that was under the authority of a centralized religious order. She concludes, “Far from being uniform, late medieval religiosity was a bundle of gendered preferences amply reflected in the landscape of female monasticism.”¹⁴ Though the chronological parameters of Strocchia’s study do not allow an exact comparison with the Bolognese case in the thirteenth century, her work suggests that Augustinian and Benedictine convents that were not incorporated into centralized religious orders continued to be the primary force in the expansion of the Florentine monastic community. It is probable that new convents that identified strongly with the new religious orders were a minority of new foundations in larger Italian cities.

ORIGIN AND FORMATION OF BONDS WITH THE ORDER

The available evidence does not allow for a substantial understanding of what it meant to all but a few of the women in these convents to be Dominican, Franciscan, or Cistercian. We do not know how their religious identity was influenced by the liturgy of these orders or by their association with monks or friars. For the Dominican convent of Sant’Agnese, we know that its founder was profoundly affected by the preaching of the friars and by her friendship with Dominic and with Jordan of Saxony, and that she assiduously sought official incorporation into the Order of Preachers. But for subsequent generations, there is little evidence to allow investigations of the

¹³ Strocchia, *Nuns and Nunneries*, 5.

¹⁴ Strocchia, *Nuns and Nunneries*, 5–6.

spiritual lives of the nuns of Sant'Agnese. For other houses such as the Poor Clares of San Francesco and the Cistercian nuns of Santa Maria del Cestello and Santa Maria della Misericordia, the evidence is even more meager. Inventories of San Francesco in the mid fourteenth century allow us to see that the convent supported a small community of friars, who presumably provided them with religious care, and also tells us what books they possessed as a group and as individuals.¹⁵ The listing of communal as well as individual property, both real estate and movable items, indicates that in the early fourteenth century ideals of Clarissan poverty were not strong factors in the nuns' spirituality.

Extant evidence from communities that were incorporated into monastic orders shows the formation of ties to the orders and the attempts of these communities to defend their status. In some of these actions, we can see not only the nuns' desire to participate in the temporal advantages of inclusion in prestigious monastic movements, but also their efforts to secure religious care from their brethren.

SANT'AGNESE AND THE DOMINICAN ORDER

The first Bolognese convent that was established as part of the mendicant movement was Sant'Agnese, a Dominican house founded by Diana d'Andalò. In addition to the large number of charters in the archives of Sant'Agnese, a brief, anonymous chronicle dating

¹⁵ The convent as a whole possessed a Bible and a New Testament, as well as liturgical books such as psalters, breviaries, lectionaries, and antiphonaries. Other books included passionals and legends of saints, as well as Gregory the Great's *Moralia* and *Dialogi*. Individual sisters mostly possessed breviaries and psalters, though Sister Gilia de Benvenutis had a Bible, a New Testament, and the *Moralia*. Books belonging to individual sisters would become the property of the convent on their deaths. ASB Dem 1/5696 no. 48, fols. 8v–9r.

to the mid thirteenth century, as well as thirty-seven letters that Jordan of Saxony wrote to Diana, provide insight into the convent's early years that is not available for other houses.¹⁶ Two important themes in the chronicle are the narration of Diana's life – thus it is frequently called the *Vita beatae Dianae* – and emphasis on the convent's Dominican identity, including the close relationship to friars and papal affirmation of the convent's incorporation. This second theme is probably the primary motive for the composition of the text, as the convent needed to establish its Dominican credentials in the mid thirteenth century because of the efforts of friars during that era to reject responsibility for the care of nuns.

The *Vita* relates that Diana was moved by the preaching of the friars when they first came to Bologna from Rome, and that she sought and was welcomed into their company. She was influential in overcoming her father's initial refusal to give the friars the church of San Nicolò della Vigne, over which he had patronage rights. Following her example, other noble women came to listen to the friars' preaching and to converse with them. Diana professed her intention to enter the religious life in the presence of some of Dominic's early companions such as Brothers Reginald of Orleans, Rudolf of Faenza, and Guala of Bergamo. She also began to discuss with the friars, and with Dominic himself, her plan to accomplish her vow. According to the chronicle, Dominic and the other friars began deliberations "concerning building a house of ladies that would be said to be and would be of the order."¹⁷ Dominic refused to give a final decision

¹⁶ According to M. P. Alberzoni, the *Vita beatae Dianae* was probably written during the 1250s. The extant Latin copy (BCB, Mss. B 2019) dates to the fifteenth century. Alberzoni, "Jordan of Saxony," 5. The text of the *Vita* is published in M. Giovanna Cambria, *Il monastero Domenicano di S. Agnese in Bologna: storia e documenti* (Bologna: Tipographia SAB, 1973), 51 n. 8.

¹⁷ "de edificanda domo dominarum, que ordinis diceretur et esset." Cambria, *Il monastero Domenicano*, 227.

until he had consulted the Lord. The next day he gave approval for the building of the convent, entrusting the task to four brothers: Guala, Rudolf, Paulo Ungaro, and Ventura of Verona. The chronicle thus emphasizes the relationship of Diana to Dominic and his early companions, as well as the deliberate nature of the decision to build a nunnery in Bologna.

Diana continued to live in her family home, concealing implements of mortification under her rich gowns. She prayed for hours in her room, but did not dare to tell her parents about her intended profession or about the plans for the monastery. In summer 1221, Diana decided to flee to Santissima Trinità di Ronzano.¹⁸ On the feast of Mary Magdalene, she told her family that she wanted to visit the monastery, traveling there with an entourage of women. There she entered the nuns' dormitory and took the habit. On learning of this, her parents and a large entourage traveled to Ronzano and forced her to leave the convent, breaking her rib in the process of bringing her home.¹⁹

Dominic died while Diana was recuperating at home. Determined to adhere to her decision to become a nun, Diana again fled to Ronzano on the feast of All Saints. This time her parents made no attempt to retrieve her from the nunnery. Jordan of Saxony, Dominic's successor as Master General of the Order, continued to work with Diana to establish a nunnery for her in Bologna. In June 1223, Diana and four companions took the Dominican habit at their new monastery, Sant'Agnese, and Diana became their abbess. Other women from nearby towns such as Ferrara came to Bologna to join the community, and Jordan arranged for four sisters from San Sisto in Rome to teach the nuns of Sant'Agnese the Dominican way of life.²⁰

¹⁸ Hinnebusch, *Dominican Order*, 1: 102.

¹⁹ Hinnebusch, *Dominican Order*, 1: 103.

²⁰ Cambria, *Il monastero Domenicano*, 228.

As Maria Pia Alberzoni notes, this account shares many narrative elements with the life of Saint Clare – inspiration by preaching, friendship with a sainted founder of the order, family obstruction of religious vocation, and escape to an existing religious house while planning the establishment of a new house.²¹

In addition to relating the founding of the convent, the author of the chronicle seems concerned to demonstrate its integration into the Dominican Order, both because of the acceptance of the convent by Jordan and other Dominican friars and because of papal confirmation of its status. The writer of the chronicle recounts that Jordan sent Guala to Pope Honorius to ask for a letter stating “that the master of the order would be bound to carry out the care for the house of Sant’Agnese just as for any house of friars of the order.”²² Guala obtained the letter, which Jordan presented to the General Chapter at Bologna, where the diffinitors approved Sant’Agnese’s acceptance and Jordan accepted Diana and her sisters into the order.²³ While the account does note that some friars at the General Chapter in Paris raised questions about the order’s inclusion of Sant’Agnese, the author quickly states that the members determined “that they could not remove the same house from their care without mortal sin.”²⁴ Jordan admonished those who had raised the questions.

Jordan’s letters to Diana are a source for additional detail regarding the order’s actions toward the monastery and Diana’s concerns about the status of her house. They also provide a window into the

²¹ Alberzoni, “Jordan of Saxony,” 6–7.

²² “ut magister ordinis domui sancte Agnetis teneratur curam gerere sicut alicuius domus fratrum.” Cambria, *Il monastero Domenicano*, 229.

²³ “Sicque felicitis memorie magister iordanis litteris sibi presentatis in generali capitulo quod tunc celebratum fuit bononie; ex voluntate omnium diffinitorum recepit eandem domum, Domum idem magister recepit in manibus suis sororem Dianam, una cum toto conventu ad professionem.” Cambria, *Il monastero Domenicano*, 229.

²⁴ “quod eandem domum non poterant a sua cura sequestrare absque mortali peccato.” Cambria, *Il monastero Domenicano*, 230.

relationship between the Master General and the prioress.²⁵ Diana's letters are no longer extant, but the convent probably kept Jordan's letters as evidence for their claims to membership in the order.²⁶ They show his initial attempts in the mid 1220s to send nuns from Prouille to Bologna to instruct Sant'Agnese in the order's practices, as well as the failure of this plan. The probable explanation for this is Cardinal Hugolino of Ostia's decision to center organization of Dominican nunneries around San Sisto in Rome, which he had played an important role in founding and for which he had written a *forma vitae*.²⁷ Jordan informed Diana of the impending arrival of four nuns from San Sisto in 1233 or 1234.²⁸ The prolonged delay probably reflects debates between the order and the papacy over the relationship between friars and nuns and the papacy's role in its organization.

The letters also display multiple instances of attempts by the friars at meetings of the General Chapters to limit their responsibility for the care of nuns, particularly at two meetings held in Paris. For instance, in the 1228 General Chapter, the friars decided that they would not accept the care of any new convent. A letter from Jordan to Diana reassures her that this does not apply to the nuns of her convent, who are "*sorores nostras*."²⁹ In 1233, while Jordan was forced by illness to remain in Trent, another General Chapter in Paris decided not to recognize Sant'Agnese as a house in their

²⁵ Jordan's letters to Diana are compiled in Jordan of Saxony, *Beati Iordani de Saxonia Epistulae*, ed. Angelus Walz, Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica 22 (Rome: Istituto Storico Domenicano, Santa Sabina, 1951).

²⁶ Alberzoni, "Jordan of Saxony," 5. ²⁷ Alberzoni, "Jordan of Saxony," 10.

²⁸ Jordan of Saxony, *Epistulae*, 24–5 (Letter 21).

²⁹ "Alia fuit causa, quare illud statuimus, non propter sorores nostras quidem, sed propter personas extraneas mulierum . . . Propterea de isto articulo nec etiam alicui umquam moveas mentionem, sed secure te habeas, quia in hac parte nihil vobis poterit deperire. Indescrete autem fecit quicumque hoc dubium tibi movit, volens tibi timorem inducere, ubi non fuit timor." Jordan, *Epistulae*, 53 (Letter 48).

order. Jordan informed Diana of this and of his success in reversing the decision.³⁰ Conflict and negotiations over the status of these and other convents continued, intensifying in the 1240s and 1250s, when at times the General Chapter would reject their association with even those convents, such as Prouille, San Sisto, and Sant'Agnese itself, with the clearest ties to the early friars and with papal confirmations of their status in the order. These convents would appeal to the Apostolic see, which would reaffirm the position of the Dominican sisters in the order.³¹

Returning to the chronicle, we can see this struggle as a clear concern – the author continues to emphasize the strong connection of Sant'Agnese to the order in the context of relating the deaths of Pope Honorius, Diana, and Jordan. After the death of Honorius, Diana seeks and gains the confirmation of her convent's place in the order. The author recounts that in this act, Diana attains her desire to have her house committed to the order by two popes.³² On the death of Diana herself, her burial is attended by all the friars of Bologna. Finally, after the death of Master Jordan, his successor, Raymond, visited Sant'Agnese, as did the next two successors.

THE ORDER OF SAN DAMIANO AND THE ORDER
OF CITEAUX

In contrast to the wealth of evidence surrounding the foundation of Sant'Agnese and its struggle to gain a secure association with the Order of Preachers, it is difficult to glean information on the early years of the convents tied to the Franciscan and Cistercian Orders in

³⁰ Jordan of Saxony, *Epistolae*, 53 (Letter 47). ³¹ Hinnebusch, *Dominican Order*, 1: 390.

³² "Nam quod optavit a summo pontifice obtinuit: sicque domus ab his duobus pontificibus magistro ordinis est commissa ante mortem ipsius." Cambria, *Il monastero Domenicano*, 231.

Bologna. There are no records of a holy founder or of inspiration by friendships with leading figures of the monastic orders. The names of two of the convents – the Clarissan house of San Francesco and the Cistercian convent of Santa Maria del Cestello – are clear statements of their affinities. San Francesco was designated from the time of its founding as being part of the Order of San Damiano (later called the Order of Saint Clare). The founding inhabitants of Santa Maria del Cestello appealed to Pope Innocent IV to gain official incorporation into the Cistercian Order. Another Cistercian house, Santa Maria della Misericordia, was consistently identified as a member of that order in papal bulls and letters, but seems to have remained under the jurisdiction of the bishop for much of its early history, with visitations and other interventions from the Cistercian monks beginning in the fifteenth century.

The first Damianite community in Bologna, San Francesco, was founded in 1231. In this year, Giacomo Pizzolo gave five and a half tornatures of land into the care of the bishop, Enrico, on which he was to establish a “*collegium* of women who are to live according to the order and rule of the enclosed nuns of San Damiano of Assisi.”³³ The monastery seems to have been accepted as part of the Franciscan community. In 1247, on the same day that he committed the Order of San Damiano to the Minister General and the prior of the Bolognese province, he specifically placed San Francesco in the friars’ care, ordering that they should administer the sacraments to the nuns.³⁴ By 1257, Pope Alexander IV referred to the group as being “*ad Romanam ecclesiam nullo medio pertinens*,” meaning that they were

³³ “*collegium mulierum que vivere debeant secundum ordinem et regulam monialium inclusarum apud sanctum damianum de assissio.*” ASB Dem., Santi Naborre e Felice, 1/5696 no. 3.

³⁴ *Analecta Franciscana sive chronica aliaque varia documenta ad historiam Fratrum Minorum spectantia*, 10 vols. (Rome: Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventura, 1927), 9: 9.

exempt from episcopal jurisdiction and under the direct protection of the Papal See.³⁵

Despite their petition to be relieved of the duty to care for other Clarissan houses in nearby cities, the friars of Bologna remained involved with San Francesco, which was grouped with the “ancient monasteries” of the order. In 1260, the friars of Bologna were granted their request to be absolved from providing care for the nuns of Imola, which Alexander agreed was a *novella plantatio*, and thus the friars were not bound to assist them.³⁶ By contrast, the friars in Bologna remained involved in the governing of San Francesco, both in spiritual and in temporal matters, acting in 1262 as witnesses for a sale of over 700 lire worth of property to finance the building of the nuns’ monastery.³⁷ The community grew rapidly in both numbers and endowment, and by 1273 there were over fifty professed nuns in San Francesco. Some of these nuns came from the most illustrious families in the city, such as the Lamberti and the Gozzadini families.³⁸ With the exception of a short-lived community of hermitesses that seem to have had Franciscan ties, they remained the only house of Clarissan women in Bologna until the early fourteenth century.

Though in Bologna there were at least three nunneries that considered themselves Cistercian, for only one of them, Santa Maria del Cestello, is there clear documentation of incorporation into the order and a consistent affiliation with the order until its suppression in the late fifteenth century. The origins of the monastery date to 1251, the year that in the past has been understood as marking the end of Cistercian willingness to incorporate new nunneries. Recent scholarship has demonstrated discrepancies between the Cistercian statute that claimed that the pope would refrain from incorporating

³⁵ ASB Dem., Santi Naborre e Felice, 64/5759, no. 6.

³⁶ *Analecta Franciscana*, 9: 23–3.

³⁷ *Analecta Franciscana*, 9: 26.

³⁸ ASB Dem., Santi Naborre e Felice, 1/5696, no. 22.

additional convents into the order and the decrees in the papal register. It is likely that the decree of Innocent IV referred to in this statute ordained that houses of Cistercian nuns would be placed under the authority of a Cistercian father abbot, such that visitations and the dispensing of sacraments would be administered only by the father abbot or his representative.³⁹ As the case of Santa Maria del Cestello demonstrates, communities of Cistercian nuns continued to gain incorporation into the order. In June 1252, Innocent incorporated Santa Maria del Cestello into the Cistercian Order and endowed it with all of the order's privileges, exempting it from episcopal jurisdiction and from payment of tithes.⁴⁰

In 1266, the General Chapter of the Cistercians ordered an inspection of Santa Maria del Cestello to determine whether it met the order's standards for incorporation. If the delegation determined that the nunnery should be incorporated, the order said, it would be supervised by Santa Maria della Columba, a house of monks in Piacenza. The order also stated that another name would have to be chosen for the house. The delegation was ordered to report back to the General Chapter the following year. Ugo of Fonte Vivo and Enrico of Santa Maria di Strada visited Santa Maria del Cestello. "Having seen and inspected the building, the resources, the books and other things consistent with the character of our order," they wrote, "we judge that this monastery ought to be incorporated and unified into our order in spiritual and temporal matters."⁴¹ The

³⁹ Constance Berman, "Beyond the Rule of Saint Benedict: The Imposition of Cistercian Customs and the Enclosure of Nuns," *Magistra* 13 (2007): 24–6.

⁴⁰ "In primis siquidem statuantes ut ordo monasticus qui secundum deum et beati Benedicti regulam atque institutionem Cisterciensis fratrum a nobis post concilium generale susceptam in eodem monasterio institutus esse dinoscitur perpetuo ibidem temporibus inuicibiliter observetur." ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 2/3244, no. 5.

⁴¹ "Visis et diligenter inspectis hedifitiis, proventibus, libris et aliis que congruunt nostri ordinis honestati ipsum monasterium nostro ordini tam in spiritualibus quam in temporalibus incorporandum et uniendum censuimus." ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 2/3244, no. 11.

visitors also proposed that the name of the house be changed to Santa Maria delle Stelle (Saint Mary of the Stars). There is no explicit rationale given for the importance of name change as part of the process of incorporation. Perhaps the Cistercians would accept the *cura monialium*, but were not comfortable with having the name of their order as part of the name of a nunnery, since “Cestello” was derived from “Citeaux.” The name change seems not to have made much difference locally; all but a few of the documents in the nunnery’s archive refer to the house by its original name. The agreement to incorporate the house was issued in the chapter room of the nunnery on August 4, 1268. The document lists the names of the house’s inhabitants: the abbess Carità, the prioress Aldegarda, and twenty-four other nuns.⁴²

In addition to Santa Maria del Cestello, the convent of Santa Maria della Misericordia was clearly described as a Cistercian community and as a member of the order in the early years after its founding in 1244. Early documents such as an indulgence from Pope Innocent IV providing a release of forty days of penance for those who visited the church on the Feast of the Assumption describe the monastery as “*Cisterciensis ordinis*.”⁴³ Nevertheless, the community seems to have been under the bishop’s jurisdiction for much of its history. It either did not have an exemption from tithes and taxes, or it did not invoke these privileges. For example, during a dispute over payment of tithes for the Regno di Sicilia in the last decade of the thirteenth century, the house is only designated by its name, and no mention of rule or order is included, either in the letters from diocesan officials to the monastery or in the nuns’ own designation

⁴² “Abbatissa et moniales omnes quarum nomina inferius continentur videlicet domina Caritas abbatissa, domina Aldegarda priora, et dicte sorores secundum Giulia, Julepta, Diana, Thomasina, Mabilia, Sibilina, Isabetta, Anfilixia, Agnixina, Girardina, Cecilia, Catarina, Benvenunta, Bartholomea, Imelda, Johana, Jacopina, Thomaxina, Patientia, Agnesia, Bonesia, Lutia, Alda, et Luchesia.” ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 2/3244, no. 11.

⁴³ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 2/3244, no. 2.

of a procurator to act on their behalf in this issue. There is no record of the convent invoking its order affiliation to escape payment or excommunication for lack of payment.⁴⁴ The convent did, however, remain a Cistercian community, and after the suppression of Santa Maria del Cestello in the late fifteenth century it was the last of its order in the city.

CHALLENGES TO STATUS

Even communities that were able to establish membership in a centralized religious order found it necessary to reaffirm and defend that status. Local religious and secular officials sometimes sought to impose payments or exercise other forms of authority over monastic houses despite privileges and exemptions that these communities enjoyed as a product of their incorporation into a centralized order. A house's status as a member of an order could also influence the appropriate forum for the adjudication of legal disputes. These circumstances demonstrate that maintaining status as part of a religious order was not only a matter of securing incorporation, but also of gaining reaffirmation of that status in the face of various challenges.

Among convents in Bologna, explicit identification of affiliation of the community is much rarer in the records of the Dominican convent when compared to houses in the Franciscan and Cistercian Orders. For Sant'Agnese, an explicit mention of the community's affiliation with the Order of Preachers tends to be associated with the need to defend the house's exemption from local authority. Though the community maintained a relatively consistent association with the order, less than 5 percent of over 1,000 extant charters and letters from the convent's foundation to the end of the fifteenth century

⁴⁴ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, nos. 1–3.

contain information relevant to its order affiliation. By contrast, San Francesco was consistently identified as either belonging to the Order of San Damiano or the Order of Saint Clare. Likewise, in ecclesiastical correspondence concerning both Santa Maria del Cestello and Santa Maria della Misericordia, it was unusual for officials to omit reference to the convents' affiliation with the Order of Citeaux.

Though it would be difficult to determine from the study of convents in one city whether a house that is more frequently identified by its order in ecclesiastical correspondence and notarial documents is less likely to experience challenges to its status, in Bologna, Sant'Agnese did need to reaffirm its incorporation and privileges more often than did San Francesco and Santa Maria del Cestello. In this set of cases, another potential explanation for the discrepancy is the more plentiful records of Sant'Agnese – it is possible that additional challenges to San Francesco and Santa Maria del Cestello did occur, but the records of these events are no longer extant. In addition, difference in social and political position might have influenced the difference in need to confirm exemptions and privileges – for example, some members of Sant'Agnese were from a family whose members had been exiled as rebels in the Ghibelline Lambertazzi party. Nuns from the de Baysio family called upon the privilege to move their disputes over family property out of local jurisdiction. There are no comparable controversies for the other convents. Additional study of the frequency of challenges to privileges and exemptions that flow from incorporation into religious orders would be necessary to determine whether there are differences in tendencies from order to order.

For Bologna, most examples of challenges and defenses to religious affiliation come from the records of Sant'Agnese. The most common reason leading the community to seek reaffirmation of

their status was the attempt of a local authority (either ecclesiastical or secular) to secure from the nuns payments of taxes or other levies. However, other issues of legal jurisdiction might lead nuns to petition the curia for a confirmation of their status.

SANT'AGNESE

As is the case with the early years of the community, the wealth of documents in the archives of Sant'Agnese allows us a glimpse into the continuing dynamics of the relationship between the convent and the Order of Friars Preachers. Nevertheless, these documents demonstrate that there could be variation in the description of convents even when the ties to the order seem not to be in question. Perhaps because of the uncertainty about the status of the convent's relationship with the Dominican Order in its early years, there is little mention of their affiliation until the second half of the thirteenth century. The first document to mention it is a privilege from Pope Innocent IV in 1254. In this letter, canon Leonardo of Cesena, in his capacity as vicar of the Bolognese Bishop Ottaviano Ubaldini, notified the nunnery about the granting of a privilege from Pope Innocent IV. The papal letter that the vicar summarizes in his own letter first describes Sant'Agnese as "ordinis Sancti Augustini," then confers its privilege, and finally explains that the rationale for this privilege is the incorporation of the house in the Order of Friars Preachers.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ "Innocentius Episcopus servus servorum Dei dilectis in Christo Filiabus Priorisse et Conventui Monialium Sancte Agnetis de Bononia Ordinis Sancti Augustini salutem, et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Vestre Religionis, qua divinis beneplacitis exequendis sedula devotione vigilanter inquisitis meretur honestas et vos favoris Apostolici Gratia prosequentes, ab his qui vobis iacturas inferre molestie valeant, vos affectu benevolo preservemus. Hinc est quod nos vestris supplicationibus inclinati vobis auctoritate presentium indulgemus ut ad preceptionem vel provisionem alicuius in ecclesiis ad mensam vestram

In the 1280s and 1290s, two issues arose that required the convent to defend its privilege, leading to a series of charters that raise the question of the house's status as members of the Dominican Order and consequently of the house's exemption from local jurisdiction. From 1281 through 1291, the convent invoked its status as members of the Order of Preachers in order to reject attempts to impose taxes and other forms of financial levies. In 1281, Sant'Agnese argued that because of its Dominican status, the convent was not bound to pay a tax of 30 soldi, though it is not clear what body was attempting to impose this tax.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, there is no record of the resolution of this matter. Sant'Agnese also argued against the Clergy of Bologna's attempt to collect 6 lire from the convent, which the sisters claimed they did not owe because of the privileges associated with the Dominican Order.⁴⁷

Another issue that led the sisters to emphasize that they were only subject to the Apostolic See and not to the jurisdiction of the bishop was a series of disputes over land that had come to the convent with two sisters, Beatrice and Agnese de Baysio. The land was inherited from their grandfather Enrighetto and their father Federico, and became a source of conflict between the sisters and their mother, Adelasia, and also with their cousins, Enrighetto, Francesco, and Pietro de Baysio.⁴⁸ The men of the family were among those expelled from the city as Lambertazzi rebels. In 1285, the *sindico*

spectantibus, vel in quibus ius patronatus habetis de beneficiis vel annuis provisionibus, seu quibuscumque redditibus per litteras Apostolica Sedis vel legatorum ipsius, per quos non sit ius alicui acquisitionem compelli minime valeatis nisi in litteris ipsius plenas et expressa de hac indulgentia et toto tenore ipsius de verbo ad verbum nec non de domo vestra et Ordini et quod incorporate Ordinis Fratrum Predicatorum existitis mentis habeatur vobis auctoritate presentium indulgemus." ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese, 55/5645, no. 10.

⁴⁶ ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese, 5/5595, no. 277.

⁴⁷ ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese, 6/5596, no. 328, fol. 6r.

⁴⁸ For an account of this lawsuit and other related matters, see Robert Brentano, *The Two Churches: England and Italy in the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 134–40.

of Sant'Agnese appeared before communal officials to argue that the quarter of Enrighetto's property that was now in the possession of Sant'Agnese should be struck from the list of conscripted rebel goods.⁴⁹ It is possible that among the reasons these women entered the religious life was the desire for refuge from political danger and for the protection of family land. The following year, Sant'Agnese obtained a similar judgment for the sisters' inheritance from their father, Federico.⁵⁰

Sant'Agnese and Santa Maria Maddalena di Valdi Pietra came into conflict in 1294 over the distribution of goods and property from Enrighetto and Federico's estates. The dispute between mother and daughters and their respective convents led Sant'Agnese to invoke their Dominican status. In February of that year, Sant'Agnese's *sindico*, Fra Tiberto, protested that the nuns of Santa Maria Maddalena di Valdi Pietra had tried to delay paying its debt to Sant'Agnese by claiming that it was under a sentence of excommunication. Tiberto countered that the Dominican nuns were exempt from excommunication, since they were clearly incorporated into the Dominican Order and enjoyed the order's privileges.⁵¹ He petitioned to move the proceeding from the court of the bishop's vicar in Bologna to that of the Dominican Archbishop of Ravenna, where they presumably felt they would get a more favorable hearing.⁵² The proceedings moved to Ravenna, then eventually to the Apostolic See. These changes of venues did not result in a resolution to the conflict. Finally, the convents agreed to name arbiters for their dispute and to abide by the

⁴⁹ ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese, 5/5595, no. 300.

⁵⁰ ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese, 6/5596, no. 308.

⁵¹ "manifeste pateat quod dictum monasterium Sancte Agnetis incorporatum esse ordini fratrem predicatorum et secundum instituta dicti ordinis regi et gubernari et gaudere debet omnibus privilegiis dicto ordini concessis." ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese, 7/5597, no. 345.

⁵² ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese, 7/5597, no. 345.

arbiters' decision regarding the division of property.⁵³ In this case, the nuns invoked their incorporation in the order as a legal strategy, though it is unclear whether this status improved the outcome for Beatrice, Adelasia, and their sisters in Sant'Agnese.

Conflict over the de Baysio legacy continued, this time with male cousins. In 1299, Beatrice and Agnesia's cousins, Enrighetto, Francesco, and Pietro, attempted to reclaim some of this land for themselves, leading to a series of legal disputes. The brothers chose to pursue their case in the bishop's court, and obtained a judgment that the land should be returned to them.⁵⁴ As might be expected, the convent defended Beatrice and Agnesia's possession of the land, and part of their strategy involved arguing that the bishop was not the appropriate authority to decide the case. Appearing in July before the court of Pope Boniface VIII in Anagni to appeal the bishop's decision, Fra Tiberto is described in this document as the "*conversus*, *sindicus*, and *procurator* of the prioress and convent of the monastery of Sant'Agnese of Bologna, Order of Friars Preachers."⁵⁵ The appeal succeeded such that the matter was tried before a papal delegate on August 20. In this case, the convent's incorporation in the Dominican Order was not mentioned – rather, Sant'Agnese is described as subject to the Apostolic See with no intervening authority.⁵⁶ In pressing this claim, the nuns did not at this time connect the exemption from episcopal authority to their association with the Dominican Order. It is possible that explaining the reason for the exemption was not necessary for the purposes of removing their case from the bishop's

⁵³ ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese, 7/7759, no. 352. This document sets the terms for the negotiation, but does not record the outcome of the arbiters' deliberations.

⁵⁴ ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese 7/5597, no. 392.

⁵⁵ "conversus, sindicus et procurator priorisse et conventus monasterii Sancte Agnetis de Bononia ordinis fratrum predicatorum." ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese, 7/5597, no. 392.

⁵⁶ "ad Romanam ecclesiam nullo medio pertinentis." ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese, 7/5597, no. 395.

jurisdiction and placing it at another court – either directly before the pope or under the authority of another prelate designated by the pope to settle the matter. Nevertheless, the convent was zealous in defending its status as subject only to papal jurisdiction.

Convents were not always successful in using incorporation and the accompanying exemption to argue against the necessity of submitting to diocesan authority. In the 1320s, the nuns of Santa Maria del Cestello resolved a conflict with the cathedral canons of Bologna, who claimed that the nuns owed taxes amounting to three *corbe* of grain on their land in the diocese, due annually to the cathedral chapter. Santa Maria del Cestello's proctor argued in 1321 that the nuns did not have to pay the tax because of the exemption they held as part of their Cistercian status. The canons, however, did not recognize this privilege and claimed that the nuns owed sixty *corbe*, reflecting twenty years of neglected payments.⁵⁷ In 1324, the nuns agreed to pay these taxes, turning over thirty *corbe* and promising to pay an additional 40 lire to compensate for the remainder of their debt.⁵⁸ This outcome may have been part of an overall decline in the fortunes of the Cistercian Order by the later Middle Ages, making it less likely that houses of that order would be able to win arguments for exemption from local levies.⁵⁹

Incorporation marked the formation of a strong tie to a monastic order, which ideally carried with it the provision of religious care by members of the same order. For most centralized orders, it meant that a monastic house could claim exemptions from the jurisdiction of the local clergy and from some financial levies. In practice, these

⁵⁷ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 6/3248, no. 9.

⁵⁸ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 6/3248, no. 10.

⁵⁹ Linda Rasmussen, "Order! Order!: Determining Order in Medieval English Nunneries," in *Our Medieval Heritage: Essays in Honour of John Tillotson for his 60th Birthday*, ed. Linda Rasmussen, Valerie Spear, and Dianne Tillotson (Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 2002), 48.

components of participation in a monastic order could require reaffirmation and renegotiation because of various challenges. Bishops and other local officials could attempt to reassert their authority, and legal opponents might ignore a monastery's exemption if they believed they could get a more favorable hearing in the bishop's court. Monastic houses, then, had both short-term and long-term interest in gaining confirmation of their status as members of a religious order that enjoyed the privileges of that order.

MENDICANT POVERTY AND TIES OF PROPERTY

While convents sometimes needed to reassert their status as members of religious orders in the face of challenges, it is clear that some communities maintained consistent ties with other houses in the order. Recent studies of the relationships between men and women in centralized monastic orders have provided evidence that women's houses may even have become better integrated into the orders over time. Though many histories of the relationship between men and women in the Franciscan movement concentrate on thirteenth-century dynamics between Francis and successors, Clare and her early followers, and papal officials interested in the organization of monastic life, Lezlie Knox has demonstrated the importance of following these relationships through the end of the medieval period. Her study of Franciscan women has demonstrated that while the focus of Clare as the founder of the order waxes and wanes through the later Middle Ages, women's communities continue to see themselves as squarely within the Franciscan tradition. In particular, women in Observant communities became well integrated into the order.⁶⁰ For Dominicans, Anne Winston-Allen and Gertrud Jaron

⁶⁰ Knox, *Creating Clare*.

Lewis have drawn on convent chronicles to show nuns' own telling of their histories, their evaluation of the religious care that they received from their Dominican brethren, and their embrace of or resistance to reforms associated with the Observant movement in the fifteenth century.⁶¹

Where Bologna is concerned, aside from the chronicle of the early years of the Dominican Sant'Agnese in the mid thirteenth century to the spiritual writings of the Observant Franciscan Caterina de' Vigri in the mid fifteenth century, there is little evidence that elucidates the spiritual lives of women in mendicant orders. There is, however, administrative and economic evidence of the integration of Sant'Agnese and San Francesco into their respective orders. From wills and other provisions that entrusted land and other forms of income to nuns in the Franciscan and Dominican Orders to administer on behalf of communities of friars that were forbidden from owning land, we can see that both clerical and lay testators perceived at least a close administrative relationship between mendicant nuns and friars.

In both orders, most communities of nuns acquired land in a manner similar to convents outside of mendicant orders. Though Clare of Assisi fought for and gained the Privilege of Poverty for her own house at San Damiano, freeing that house from the requirement of accepting property, this pursuit of not only personal but communal poverty was exceptional. This circumstance was in part because of the reluctance of popes and cardinal protectors to allow enclosed communities of women to be without a source of income. Another factor was the diversity of interpretations of poverty among nuns in this movement – some were inspired by this element of the piety of Clare and Francis and sought to emulate them, while others did not

⁶¹ Lewis, *By Women, for Women*; Winston-Allen, *Convent Chronicles*.

place the same importance on communal poverty and did not object to acquiring property that could provide income. As we shall see, the Poor Clares of San Francesco in Bologna acquired extensive property holdings, and in addition to the communal holdings, individual nuns retained rights to particular land.

These links of property could be interpreted as a sign of falling away from the ideals of mendicancy – by the mid thirteenth century, both orders were increasingly following the practice of “using” property that others held for them.⁶² The issue of property famously led to internal divisions among Franciscans, with some eschewing the building of monasteries and the use of land. Significant disputes arose between spiritual Franciscans who rejected the use of property and preferred a stricter interpretation of poverty and conventuals who believed that friars could establish churches and residences as long as they did not own the property. By the early fourteenth century, the spirituals had been marginalized from the order.⁶³ In the Dominican Order, general and provincial chapters repeatedly warned friars that they should not accept property or other sources of revenue, even in common, though they could use property held by others, including property held on their behalf by their Cardinal Protector.⁶⁴ This practice was the official policy of the order until Sixtus IV granted them the right to hold property in common in 1458.⁶⁵

Differences between rules regarding property in the male and female branches of the mendicant orders provided a loophole for those wishing to assure male mendicants of a continuous source

⁶² Jennifer Kolpacoff Deane, *A History of Medieval Heresy and Inquisition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 126.

⁶³ C. H. Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society* (London and New York: Longman, 1994), 62–4.

⁶⁴ Hinnebusch, *Dominican Order*, 1: 148–63. ⁶⁵ Hinnebusch, *Dominican Order*, 1: 258.

of income.⁶⁶ Beginning in the 1280s, lay and clerical benefactors gave land to the nuns of San Francesco and Sant'Agnese with the mandate that they use a large percentage of the revenues to support communities of friars. In some cases, the language of the charters (whether wills or donations *inter vivos*) suggests that the donor would have given the gift to the friars if they were allowed to receive land, and that the donation to the sisters was merely a strategy for accomplishing this goal. However, at least one donor, a professor of medicine named Taddeo Alderotti, intended his very large gift to the nuns of San Francesco to establish a community of friars residing near the convent, who could provide religious care for the nuns. The nuns of Sant'Agnese also used these bequests as a bargaining tool for the provision of the *cura monialium*.

In 1286, Domenico Poeta resolved to revive a settlement of friars at a place called "Caldararia" in Borgo Panigiale, a town in the Bolognese *contado*. The community of seven friars that had been established by Baruffaldino Geremei and his granddaughter, Bolnisia, had become deserted because of lack of provisions for continuing support.⁶⁷ Knowing that the friars were prohibited from accepting property, Poeta donated two tracts of land totaling 420

⁶⁶ I am not aware of any studies that focus on this issue of property ties between mendicant friars and nuns or other women with whom they are affiliated, but brief passages in the work of Bernhard Neidiger on Basel suggest that this strategy may not have been isolated to Bologna. Neidiger finds donations funding annual payments (including those for anniversary masses) that were divided between St. Clara in Basel and the brothers of the *Barfußkloster*, and between the same brothers and the beguines of Gnadental; the Dominican nuns of Basel and the friars of Klingental also shared the proceeds from donations to the nuns. Neidiger, *Mendikanten zwischen Ordensideal und Städtischer Realität: Untersuchungen zum wirtschaftlichen Verhalten der Bettelorden in Basel* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1981), 95–9.

⁶⁷ Baruffaldino Geremei was a leader of the Bolognese faction roughly aligned with the Guelf party, which came to be known by his family name. Bolnisia, daughter of Baruffaldino's son Guidone, was the last surviving member of his lineage. Guiseppe Gozzadini, *Delle torri gentilizie di Bologna e delle famiglie alle quale prima appartennero* (Bologna: Nicolo Zanichelli, 1880), 289–91.

tornatures to the sisters of San Francesco, stipulating that they could keep 6 lire for their own *pittancia*, or support meant to augment funds for daily meals, but otherwise should turn over the revenues from the land to the provincial officials to provide for the friars at Caldararia.⁶⁸ Similarly, in 1292, a canon named Bonifacio “de Lauglano” donated 140 tornatures of land to San Francesco, intending that they would use it to support a small community of friars in the diocese of Bologna in a place called “Planorium.” In this case, the sisters would have 3 lire on the feast of Saint Andrew the Apostle, turning over the rest of the income from the land to the provincial minister and other officials to distribute to the friars.

By contrast, the 1293 donation of Taddeo Alderotti to San Francesco was intended both to establish and support a community of friars and to assure that there were daily masses in the nuns’ church.⁶⁹ Alderotti, a professor of medicine who came to Bologna from Florence, bequeathed 4,000 lire to the nuns of San Francesco, with which they were to purchase revenue-producing lands. This income would support a community of thirteen friars and one servant, to be housed near San Francesco on the Strada Santo Stefano. The sisters were also to give 50 lire per year to a Minor Friar studying theology at the University of Paris. Beyond these continuing gifts, the will stipulated that the nunnery of San Francesco would receive one soldo for each sister on the 7th, 30th, and 100th day after Alderotti’s death and again on its anniversary. Communities of friars at seven locations, including those at Caldararia and at Planorium, would get ten soldi total on each of those days. The professor made a provision in the event that the nuns of San Francesco or the friars of Bologna did not agree to these terms – in that case, the money would go to the Cistercian monks of Santa Maria in Strada or, failing

⁶⁸ *Analecta Franciscana*, 9: 133–41.

⁶⁹ *Analecta Franciscana*, 9: 270–3.

that, would be distributed to the poor and infirm. In 1297, the nuns of San Francesco finalized the agreement to abide by the terms of the will.⁷⁰

The Dominican nuns of Sant'Agnese were the recipients of similar bequests and gifts. The bishop of Cervia, Teodorico Borgognoni, gave them an *inter vivos* donation of twenty-seven tornatures of land with a *domus* to S. Agnese, such that they could keep 10 percent of revenues as *pittancia* for themselves and had to give the remaining ninety percent to the Friars Preachers in Bologna. If the Dominican friars and sisters of Bologna did not observe this convention, the land would go to the *conventum Sororum minorum*, who would keep 10 percent, and 90 percent would go to the Friars Minor of Bologna.⁷¹ This was the smaller of at least two bequests by Borgognoni to houses of Dominican nuns. In his 1298 testament, he left 1,100 lire to the convent of San Mattia, a house that had been Augustinian but that had come into the Dominican sphere of influence in the 1270s and 1280s.⁷² With this money, the nuns were charged with purchasing property and with sending 90 percent of the revenues to the Dominican friars in Borgognoni's hometown of Lucca, keeping the remaining 10 percent for themselves. Teodorico chose to set up a relationship in which the nuns of San Mattia would have to pay the Dominicans of Lucca annually *in perpetuo*. There is some evidence that the payment to the Dominicans served in part as compensation for masses said on the anniversary of the bishop's death. In this case, however, there is no provision that the sisters would receive any spiritual care from friars.

As was the case with San Francesco, lay donors also used this strategy to provide money both to the nuns of Sant'Agnese and to

⁷⁰ *Analecta Franciscana*, 9: 359–64.

⁷¹ *Analecta Franciscana*, 9: 680.

⁷² ASB Dem., San Mattia, 1/5762, nos. 3, 12–13.

the Dominican friars in Bologna. Two cases from the 1330s provide examples of lay women leaving bequests to Sant'Agnese with the instructions that they should turn over a portion of the revenue from donated lands to the friars of San Domenico. In 1336, among a wide variety of monetary donations for masses and for distribution of charity, Margarita Pizzigotti left eleven tornatures of land to the sisters of Sant'Agnese. They were instructed to give half of the annual revenues to the Friar Preachers of Bologna, keeping half for themselves for *pittancia* and for an annual mass for Pizzigotti's soul in the nuns' church. Similarly, in 1337, a woman named Briccio Accati left 100 tornatures to Sant'Agnese, also stipulating that half of the income generated by the land should go to the friars of San Domenico. In return, the friars should say masses for Accati.⁷³ This form of donation that provided property and some income to nuns and a secure source of income to the friars was employed by clergy and by both male and female lay donors. Though it is difficult to draw broad inferences from this small number of cases, lay women seem to have been more interested in dividing the income from the property equitably.

These kinds of bequests could have considerable influence in the convent's relationship with their Dominican brethren. An example of this is the complex bequest of Cardinal Matteo Orsini, who left significant land holdings – as well as money meant for the purchase of additional land – to Sant'Agnese.⁷⁴ As part of this bequest, the sisters were directed to use the revenues from this land to distribute specific sums of money to all convents of Dominican friars in the Roman province, and also to make payments to the friars of San Domenico in Bologna. In the years following this bequest, the friars

⁷³ Cambria, *Il monastero Domenicano*, 89–90, 107 n. 22; the testaments of Margarita Pizzigotti and Briccio Accati are ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese 12/5602, nos. 627 and 635, respectively.

⁷⁴ ASB Dem., San Domenico, 117/7451, not numbered, dated April 19, 1340.

of San Domenico became much more involved in the temporal and spiritual care of the nuns of Sant'Agnese.

Sant'Agnese was given over 4,000 florins' worth of land near Bologna as well as 3,000 florins for the purchase of additional land. The Sant'Agnese nuns were to manage this property and use the revenues to pay a series of yearly obligations outlined in the cardinal's will. This included annual payments to twenty-three convents of friars in the Roman province, in amounts from two to eight florins. The cardinal made separate provisions for two communities of friars in the city of Rome, also to be paid from the revenues of the Bolognese property. A gift of 20 florins supported masses at the cardinal's burial place, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, at which the prior and two older brothers were to say masses for the cardinal's soul. An additional eight florins would pay for masses in the chapel of Saint Catherine in that church. At Santa Sabina, twenty-four florins endowed masses in November. This community was also to receive 100 florins each year to distribute through the province for *pittancia cotidiana*. The same amount would go to the community of friars in Florence to distribute for *pittancia* in the month of August.⁷⁵

In addition to these gifts to individual communities of friars, the nuns of Sant'Agnese were to send 200 florins to the Roman province in general for the payment of debts, with any remaining amount to be used to endow masses for the cardinal's soul. Beyond this amount, Sant'Agnese was to send twelve florins to help pay expenses of the Provincial Chapter. Fifty florins were to go to the General Chapter of the Order. In the event that no chapter took place in a given year, this sum was to go to the friars of San Domenico in Bologna.

Though the distribution of payments went overwhelmingly to male communities, the cardinal did provide some gifts to

⁷⁵ ASB Dem., San Domenico, 117/7451, not numbered, dated April 19, 1340, fol. 2v.

Dominican nuns. Beyond specific one-time gifts of liturgical materials to the nuns of Rome, Florence, Foligno, Gubbio, and Lucca, the cardinal did provide for an annual payment of thirty florins to be distributed to the nuns of the Roman province, though in contrast to his provisions for communities of friars, he did not specify amounts for any individual houses. Some money supported religious care of Sant'Agnese. Twenty-two florins supported the activities of an *antiquior frater* to hear confessions at Sant'Agnese. This amount was to be paid in three parts – on the first Sunday of Advent, and on Kalends of March and of June.⁷⁶ Beyond this, twelve florins endowed masses at Sant'Agnese on the feast of Saint Catherine, to be performed by a friar from San Domenico. An additional thirty florins compensated Sant'Agnese for their efforts in administering the bequest, though the will stipulated that they could only receive this money as long as they accepted this responsibility. They could choose to turn the responsibility over to another organization, but they would then lose the annual payment of thirty florins.⁷⁷

In 1358, the nuns of Sant'Agnese ceded to their Bolognese brothers at San Domenico a considerable amount of land, including the land bequeathed to them by Matteo Orsini. Along with Orsini's land, the sisters gave the friars usufruct of land left to them by at least forty other men and women from illustrious families in Bologna, including from the late *signore* of Bologna, Taddeo Pepoli, and from other members of the Pepoli family. In return, they received assurances of the provision of spiritual care from the friars in perpetuity, including daily masses, the provision of sacraments and burials, and preaching at appropriate times, for which the friars would receive 4 soldi. Another significant component of the agreement was that

⁷⁶ ASB Dem., San Domenico, 117/7451, not numbered, dated April 19, 1430, fol. 3v.

⁷⁷ ASB Dem., San Domenico, 117/7451, dated April 19, 1430, fol. 3r.

Sant'Agnese would continue to receive an annual payment of thirty florins from the legacy of Orsini. Two priests would be in residence at the church. The agreement was to be in force in perpetuity.⁷⁸

The combination of the cardinal's bequest in 1340 and this transaction with the friars of San Domenico in 1358 presents a complex picture of the workings of the relationship between Sant'Agnese and the Friars Preachers. The cardinal's choice to leave his property to the Bolognese nunnery and to charge them with providing these payments to Dominican friars suggests that they were well integrated into the order. Nevertheless, the necessity of ceding control over the lands in question in the 1358 agreement with San Domenico in return for spiritual care from the friars indicates that they felt the need to take significant action in order to receive assurances of care. Though it is not possible to discern from the convent's record who was providing sacraments to the nuns in the era before this transaction, given their wealth it is likely that they were able to pay either parish priests or friars for masses and confessions. The decision to make this agreement with the friars of San Domenico for the provision of spiritual care indicates that they continued to value a close association with the friars, desiring residence of friars at their community, daily masses from the friars, and preaching at appropriate occasions.

Where the property is concerned, it appears that in practice the agreement meant that Sant'Agnese retained technical possession of the land while the friars enjoyed usufruct. Even after 1358, when other communities of friars commissioned representatives to seek payment of the money specified in Orsini's will, the proctors from these communities sought the money from Sant'Agnese rather than from San Domenico. This remained the status quo until 1459, when

⁷⁸ ASB Dem., Sant'Agnese, 17/5607, no. 881.

the friars decided to challenge Sant'Agnese's right to receive the thirty florins that would compensate for administration of the land and distribution of payments. Significantly, they decided to take this action in the year after Sixtus IV gave the order permission to hold property in common. San Domenico sought an opinion from the jurist Antonio di Prato Vecchio regarding the status of the land and payments. The matters to be decided included whether Sant'Agnese or San Domenico had the right to make arrangements with tenants concerning the land, and whether the nuns or the friars had the right to the revenues from the lands, including the thirty florins for administration specified in Orsini's will. The jurist found in favor of the friars on both matters.⁷⁹ In 1537, Pope Paul III gave the friars the right to alienate property in the Orsini legacy, indicating that by this time the right to the property had passed fully to San Domenico.⁸⁰

It is clear that despite early disputes over the nuns' status in the order and periodic attempts of clerical and secular parties to question the force of the convent's exemption, Sant'Agnese's membership in the Dominican Order was strong and consistent. The extent to which this meant engagement with Dominican friars may have fluctuated, leading the nuns to make a financial arrangement with the friars of San Domenico to ensure perpetual access to religious care. Though this element of the relationship was not specified in the agreement, the transaction coincided with greater engagement of the friars in the temporal workings of the nunnery, with friars being more likely to serve as proctors in economic and legal matters.

Bequests giving houses of nuns responsibility for providing financial support to houses of friars demonstrate that the testators

⁷⁹ ASB Dem., San Domenico, 117/7451, no. 4.

⁸⁰ ASB Dem., San Domenico, 117/7451, no. 5.

perceived the men and women of religious orders to be closely linked. Though they may have violated the spirit of mendicant rules requiring that friars eschew the possession of property both personally and communally, they allowed these communities to maintain the letter of the law while having the security of relatively predictable sources of income. For nuns, these gifts were a double-edged sword. Convents inherited the land and received some income from the bequest, and could use the monetary donations to the friars as leverage for negotiating spiritual care. But the bequests could also be a source of conflict. Perhaps because the lands were not producing sufficient income, or because of the burden of administering a bequest (especially one as complicated as Matteo Orsini's will), or simply because they may have needed the income themselves, convents did not always send the agreed-upon payments to their intended recipients, and houses of friars sent legal representatives to claim the payments outlined in the will. Moreover, the fact that convents sometimes needed to use these financial incentives to secure religious care from their brethren suggests continuing tensions in the relationship between nuns and friars.

CONCLUSIONS

The growth of centralized monastic orders such as the Cistercian Order and the foundation of new orders such as the Order of Preachers and the Order of Friars Minor was an important development in monastic life in the thirteenth century. Houses of religious women affiliated with these orders accounted for a minority of new convents in this era. Relatively few houses were founded with the intention of participating in these orders, though later in the century others came to associate with these orders while remaining under the bishop's jurisdiction.

In the middle decades of the thirteenth century, monks and friars debated among themselves about the extent of their responsibility to the religious women in their orders. The friendship of Diana d'Andalò with Dominic, Jordan of Saxony, and other friars demonstrates that some religious men developed partnerships with religious women and sought to include them in the order. On the other hand, the struggle of Sant'Agnese to remain in the order during attempts in the mid thirteenth century to relieve friars from the duty to care for nuns illustrates continuing conflict between religious men and women over the demands of religious care. Despite the attempts of monks and friars to free themselves from the responsibility to care for nuns, convents continued to gain incorporation into religious orders. Santa Maria del Cestello became part of the Order of Citeaux during a period in which the order was at least in theory not accepting any additional convents into the order.

Though for Sant'Agnese we have letters, chronicles, and vitae that shed light on the actions of the founders, for other convents such material is not available. In the absence of chronicles and other narratives that provide accounts of the meaning that religious women drew from participation in monastic orders and that show the dynamics of the relationship between religious men and women in these orders, we can use practical documents such as legal proceedings and wills to investigate the connection between religious men and women. Incorporation into a religious order was a status that could require renegotiation and defense. Even women in incorporated houses had periods of greater and lesser contact with their religious brethren. Legal and financial battles with bishops, family members, and other lay persons could make it necessary for a house to reaffirm their religious status.

While these practical matters can allow us at times to see the challenges that religious women faced in maintaining their status,

they can also demonstrate the integration of religious women's communities into their orders. This is particularly true in cases where bequests tied men's and women's communities in mendicant orders together. Clerical and lay donors to convents of both the Dominican and Franciscan Orders saw nuns and friars as being sufficiently connected that they could give resources to nuns that would primarily benefit friars of their order. This situation could lead to additional conflict between the nuns charged with distributing annual payments and the friars who were eager to collect the money. Nevertheless, some donors included in the arrangement provisions that required the friars to provide nuns with religious care. Beyond any specific stipulations of the will, nuns could use these resources to negotiate for regular provision of sacraments.

Convents and religious orders

In scholarship on medieval monasticism, the thirteenth century is associated with the rise of the mendicant orders, especially the Franciscans and Dominicans, and with the Fourth Lateran Council's mandate that all monastic houses adopt an approved rule and hold General Chapters regularly, following the Cistercian model.¹ As large, centralized monastic orders began to develop in the twelfth century, the place of women in these groups and the role of monks and friars in providing the care of nuns (*cura monialium*) became a subject of debate.² As we have seen in Chapter 2, with the emergence of the mendicant orders and the arrival of the Cistercian Order in Italy, many new communities of religious women aligned themselves with these groups. Convents pursued and obtained formal recognition from the orders' General Chapters, though at times the governing bodies of monastic orders sought to minimize their responsibility to provide care for nuns, even expelling incorporated nunneries from the order. This dynamic has been well studied in scholarship on

¹ Decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council, canons 12–13, in Alberigo et al., ed., *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, 216–18. Portions of this chapter appear in my article, “Convents and Change: Autonomy, Marginalization, and Religious Affiliation in Late Medieval Bologna,” *Catholic Historical Review* 97 (2011): 250–75.

² Two seminal studies covering the struggles of women in a number of different monastic orders are Grundmann's *Religious Movements* and Fontette's *Les Religieuses*. This topic also receives considerable treatment in McNamara's *Sisters in Arms*, especially on pages 260–323.

women's monastic life in the High Middle Ages.³ Summarizing the focus on conflict between religious men and women, one scholar has noted that "the leitmotif for religious women within orders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is as succinct as it is familiar: decline."⁴

While studies of the negotiations between religious women and male authorities in religious orders elucidate an important dynamic affecting many convents, focusing on the problems religious women had in securing the *cura monialium* from monks and friars emphasizes religious men's ability to determine the identity and status of nuns rather than the nuns' own ideas about their place in religious life. As we have seen, the relationship between religious women, monastic orders, and diocesan officials could vary from house to house, even among those that professed the same rule and wore the same habit. There were houses that followed the practices of large orders such as the Cistercians or Dominicans though they were not recognized by the leaders of those orders, but rather remained under the care of their bishop. Such convents probably relied on local priests to administer the sacraments.⁵ This may have happened because of the unwillingness of monastic men to accept the responsibility to care for their sisters. Alternatively, it may indicate that these communities did not seek incorporation, but rather defined themselves in other

³ On the relationship between the Franciscans and the Poor Clares, see Knox, *Creating Clare*. On Cistercian nuns, see Berman, "Were there Twelfth-Century Cistercian Nuns?"; also, Degler-Spengler, "The Incorporation of Cistercian Nuns into the Order," 507–74. On Dominican women, see Lehmijoki-Gardner, "Dominican Order," 223.

⁴ Fiona Griffiths, "'Men's Duty to Provide for Women's Needs': Abelard, Heloise, and their Negotiation of the *cura monialium*," in *Medieval Religion: New Approaches*, ed. Constance H. Berman (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 292.

⁵ Grundmann explores this phenomenon in a discussion of religious women's communities in Germany that followed rules similar to those of the Dominican convent of Santo Sisto in Rome, but embeds it in a discussion of the difficulty that religious women had in securing the *cura monialium* from the Order of Preachers. Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, 103–8.

Table 3.1 *Nunneries by order in 1200*

Benedictine	Camaldolese	Cistercian	Clarissan	Dominican	Augustinian	Other
S. Colombano	S. Cristina di Stifonte					S. Maria del Monte della Guardia
SS. Gervasio e Protasio	S. Maria di Biliemme					
S. Margherita						
SS. Vitale e Agricola						

ways – for example, rule and habit; patron saint; a pious founder or abbess; or papal privileges.

By examining religious houses with looser ties to monastic orders, we can get a sense of the fluidity and complexity of monastic women's lives in the later Middle Ages. Of the thirty-five communities of religious women in Bologna at the end of the thirteenth century, only half had strong ties to centralized orders (see Tables 3.1 through 3.3). Six convents were autonomous Benedictine houses – four of these were aristocratic institutions dating to the early twelfth century, and two were newer communities founded in the mid thirteenth century.⁶ By the end of the thirteenth century, around one-third of the communities for religious women in Bologna followed the Rule of Saint Augustine without incorporation into a widely recognized order such as the Dominicans (who used the

⁶ For an overview of women's monastic houses in Bologna, including dates of foundation or earliest record, important transitions, and dates of suppression or extinction, see Zarri, "Monasterii femminili," 133–224. San Colombano, Santa Margherita, Santi Gervasio e Protasio, and Santi Vitale e Agricola were Benedictine convents that were in existence by the early twelfth century. San Nicolò di Carpineta and Santa Maria di Fontana were founded between 1235 and 1253.

Table 3.2 *Nunneries by order in 1250*

Benedictine	Camaldolese	Cistercian	Clarissan	Dominican	Augustinian	Other
S. Colombano	S. Cristina della Fondazza	S. Maria della Misericordia	S. Francesco	S. Agnese	S. Maria del Monte della Guardia	SS. Trinità di Ronzano
SS. Gervasio e Protasio	S. Maria di Biliemme				S. Caterina di Quarto	
S. Margherita	S. Nicolò della Casa di Dio				S. Maria delle Pugliole	
SS. Vitale e Agricola					S. Agostino di Fossa Cavallina	
S. Nicolò di Carpineta					S. Giovanni Battista	
					S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite	
					S. Maria Nuova	

Table 3.3 *Nunneries by order in 1300*

Benedictine	Camaldolese	Cistercian	Clarissan	Dominican	Augustinian	Other
S. Colombano	S. Cristina della Fondazza	S. Maria della Misericordia	S. Francesco	S. Agnese	Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia & S. Mattia	S. Maria di Valdi Pietra
SS. Gervasio e Protasio	S. Maria di Biliemme	S. Maria del Cestello	Eremitesse della Catena	S. Pietro Martire	S. Caterina di Quarto	S. Maria di Castel di Britti
S. Margherita	S. Nicolò della Casa di Dio	S. Guglielmo		S. Maria delle Pugliole	S. Agostino di Fossa Cavallina	
SS. Vitale e Agricola	S. Salvatore			S. Maria Nuova	S. Giovanni Battista	
S. Nicolò di Carpineta	S. Anna				S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite	
S. Maria di Fontana	S. Croce				S. Lorenzo	
					S. Orsolina	
					S. Maria della Volta del Borghetto	
					S. Maria di Valverde	
					SS. Maria e Andrea di Pontemaggiore	
					S. Maria di Nazareth della Vezza	

Augustinian Rule augmented by the order's statutes) or the Augustinian Hermits.⁷

In this chapter, I shall examine six communities of religious women in late medieval Bologna to illustrate the varying and fluid relationship between these communities and specific monastic orders. Three of these communities – San Giovanni Battista, Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, and Santa Caterina – display the pull of the Dominican Order in Bologna. All three of these houses emerged from groups that originally did not follow a widely recognized rule. In the mid thirteenth century, these communities adopted the Rule of Saint Augustine (or had it imposed on them). After being given the Augustinian Rule, San Giovanni Battista very quickly demonstrated an affinity with the Order of Preachers and was often described as following its statutes, but remained under the jurisdiction of the bishop throughout its history. Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia and Santa Caterina had a more complex relationship to the Dominicans. Each of these houses demonstrated a desire to remain autonomous. Well into the fourteenth century, Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia drew on papal privileges and exemptions gained by its hermitess founder to assert its autonomy from any religious order. Similarly, Santa Caterina maintained an identity of its own small order following its own rule, despite the imposition of the Rule of St. Augustine in 1247. Yet by the fifteenth century, these communities developed a stable relationship with the Order of Preachers. For Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia and its sister

⁷ These houses, with their approximate foundation dates or dates of adopting the Rule of Saint Augustine were San Giovanni Battista (became Augustinian in 1239); Santa Caterina di Quarto (1247); Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia (1249); Sant'Agostino di Fossa Cavallina (1250); Santa Maria di Nazareth della Vezza (1258); San Lorenzo (1259); Santa Maria della Volta del Borghetto (1259); Sant'Orsolina (1259); Santa Maria Maddelena di Valdi pietra (1265); Santa Maria Nuova (1281); Santa Maria delle Pugliole (1282); Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore (1290). Zarri, "Monasterii femminili," 133–224.

house, San Mattia, the first clear evidence of their incorporation into the order is a papal bull written in the waning years of the century.

Though most Augustinian communities in Bologna were pulled into the Dominican Order, others remained Augustinian, either as autonomous houses or as part of a small, regional congregation of Augustinian canons. Two communities that illustrate this phenomenon are San Lorenzo and Sant'Orsolina. Though there is a dearth of records in the early decades after the foundations of these communities, both appear for the first time in 1259 city statutes detailing distribution of money and grain to pious foundations. There is little evidence of any ecclesiastical concern over their practices or monastic affiliation until the fifteenth century. As part of a larger program of monastic reform in Bologna, Bishop Niccolò Albergati began to devote attention to Sant'Orsolina, placing this house under the authority of an Augustinian congregation in Pavia.⁸ Sant'Orsolina and San Lorenzo were merged after the destruction of Sant'Orsolina's convent, and the community at San Lorenzo petitioned successfully to be placed in the care of the nearby Augustinian canons of San Giovanni in Monte, recently merged into the Congregation of Lateran Canons created by Albergati. This made San Lorenzo part of this congregation as well.

Though the convents described above are examples of a fairly linear pull toward more organized monastic orders over the course of the later Middle Ages, other communities changed rule and order in ways that are difficult to integrate into larger trends. For example, the convent of San Guglielmo veered between Cistercian and

⁸ Blessed Niccolò Albergati (d. 1443), who came from a prominent Bolognese family, was a Carthusian monk who became bishop of Bologna in 1417. He was made Cardinal-priest of Santa Croce in Jerusalem in 1426. He pursued reform of both regular and secular clergy, which included establishing schools for training clergy and organizing disparate houses of Augustinian canons in several Italian cities into congregations. John Hunter, "Who is Jan van Eyck's 'Cardinal Niccolò Albergati?'" *Art Bulletin* 75.2 (1993): 207–18.

Table 3.4 *Nunneries by order in 1400*

Benedictine	Camaldolese	Cistercian	Clarissan	Dominican	Augustinian	Other
S. Margherita	S. Cristina della Fondazza	S. Maria della Misericordia	S. Francesco	S. Agnese	Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia & S. Mattia	S. Maria delle Pugliole
SS. Gervasio e Protasio	S. Anna	S. Maria del Cestello	SS. Ludovico e Alessio	S. Pietro Martire	S. Caterina di Quarto	Santuccie
SS. Vitale e Agricola		S. Guglielmo		S. Maria Nuova	S. Lorenzo	
				S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite	S. Orsolina	
					S. Giovanni Battista	
					S. Maria Maddalena di Valdipietra	
					S. Maria delle Repentite	

Table 3.5 *Nunneries by order in 1500*

Benedictine	Camaldolese	Cistercian	Clarissan	Dominican	Augustinian	Other
S. Margherita	S. Cristina della Fondazza	S. Maria della Misericordia	S. Francesco	S. Agnese	S. Lorenzo	SS. Trinità (Gesuate)
SS. Gervasio e Protasio		S. Guglielmo	SS. Ludovico e Alessio	S. Pietro Martire	S. Maria delle Repentite	S. Omobono (Servite)
SS. Vitale e Agricola			Corpus Domini	S. Maria Nuova		
				S. Mattia e S. Maria del Monte della Guardia		
				S. Maria delle Pugliole		
				S. Maria Maddalena di Valdipietra		
				S. Giovanni Battista		

Augustinian observance, finally aligning with the Dominican Order in the early sixteenth century. Studying the histories of these monastic houses – whether moving enthusiastically or reluctantly toward integration into centralized congregations and orders, and whether adhering to larger trends or changing erratically – complicates the more common image of religious women's communities as consistently seeking incorporation into male-centered religious orders. These convents demonstrate that communities of religious women could have ambiguous relationships with orders not only because of the difficulty of gaining acceptance from monastic men, but also because of their own alternative ways of understanding their place in the church. Moreover, contradicting the older scholarly narrative that once saw decline for women in religious orders and that tended to focus on monastic men's efforts to expel women from religious orders in the thirteenth century, a timeline that extends to the fifteenth century shows the gradual integration of women into religious orders (see Tables 3.4 and 3.5).⁹

SAN GIOVANNI BATTISTA

The convent of San Giovanni Battista is the first of three houses founded by nuns leaving the community of Santissima Trinità di Ronzano, which was part of a congregation led by the Canons Regular of Saint Marco of Mantua, and which followed an obscure rule written by the Blessed Albert of Mantua.¹⁰ All three of these houses were given the Rule of Saint Augustine sometime in the

⁹ Though Bologna is dominated by the Dominican Order, Lezlie Knox has demonstrated a similar trend for the strengthening of the ties between the Poor Clares and the Franciscan friars throughout Italy. Knox, *Creating Clare*, especially 57–86 and 123–56.

¹⁰ The congregation of S. Marco of Mantua was founded in 1194 by Bishop Enrico and approved by Innocent III in 1204. They followed the Rule of Saint Albert of Mantua, which seems to have been different from the Rule of Saint Albert followed by the Carmelite Order. See Peter Day, *Dictionary of Religious Orders* (London: Burns and Oates, 2001), 264, and “Canonici Regolari di San Marco,” *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione*, ed.

thirteenth century, and over time developed a relationship with the Order of Preachers, though some did so more quickly and more firmly than others.

In 1239, Villana Calderini and the Dominican friar Angelo di Venezia placed the first stone at the location of a new convent in honor of the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist. This act was witnessed by the *sindico* of Santa Caterina di Quarto, which at the time observed its own rule, and also by an apostolic penitentiary named Stefano and another Dominican friar, Guido di Venezia. Despite the Dominican presence, the convent seems to have maintained a tie to the community at Ronzano until 1247.¹¹ In August that year, an apostolic penitentiary named Stefano presided over a meeting at San Giovanni Battista at which the sisters professed the Rule of Saint Augustine and were given the statutes of the Dominicans to follow. The record of the event specifically notes that the duty of visiting and correcting the sisters fell to the bishop of Bologna and not to the Dominicans, and that Stefano was presiding by the authority of the bishop. Thus, the sisters' relationship to the order was ambiguous, since they were not necessarily granted affiliation with the Dominicans by the General Chapter or by the pope, and therefore would not meet the standard articulated by the order for incorporation of nunneries.

Subsequent papal letters do not entirely clarify the status of San Giovanni Battista. In November 1250, Innocent IV took San Giovanni Battista under papal protection and confirmed that they were to follow the Rule of Saint Augustine, but made no mention of the Dominican statutes.¹² Two bulls from Alexander IV in 1259 are

Guerrino Pelliccia and Giancarlo Rocca, 10 vols. (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1975), 2: cols. 122–3.

¹¹ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 185.

¹² The nature of this protection is not clear. Though sometimes a papal privilege exempts a monastery from the jurisdiction of the bishop, this seems not to be the case for San

addressed “to the prioress and the convent of the monastery of San Giovanni Battista in Bologna, of the order of Saint Augustine, living according to the institutes of the Order of Friars Preachers.”¹³

It is difficult to interpret the differing descriptions of San Giovanni Battista’s observance. Innocent IV’s 1250 bull confirming the Rule of Saint Augustine for the community occurred during a period in which he was not reluctant to affiliate women’s houses with the Dominican Order.¹⁴ In the year of Alexander’s indulgences in 1259, the Dominicans had clarified the cases in which a nunnery could be considered part of the order to include convents with letters of incorporation from popes, Masters General of the order, and General Chapters.¹⁵ Alexander’s phrasing suggests that the convent was known to follow Dominican practices but was not considered officially part of the order.

What was the local understanding of San Giovanni Battista’s observance? In this period, ecclesiastical officials do not always mention order affiliation of nunneries in their correspondence with other clerics or with the nunneries themselves. Most documents produced locally involved property transactions, which mention only the monastery’s name and perhaps that of the prioress or procurator. The only indication of the sisters’ understanding of their own observance comes from a 1275 record of the entrance of a woman named Bonadomana into the nunnery. Her profession states that she “has accepted the rule of the Blessed Augustine in the monastery of San Giovanni Battista of Bologna,” making no mention of the

Giovanni Battista. There are subsequent receipts of the monastery fulfilling obligations to the bishop and of his nomination of officials to act as procurator for the nuns. See ASB Dem., 7/4491, nos. 3 and 35; ASB Dem. 4/4488, no. 9.

¹³ “Priorisse et conventui monasterii Sci. Johannis Baptiste Bononiensis ordinis Sci. Augustini secundum instituta ordinis fratrum predicatorum viventibus.” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 5/4489, nos. 13–14.

¹⁴ Fontette, *Les Religieuses*, 120–1; Hinnebusch, *Dominican Order*, 1: 390.

¹⁵ Hinnebusch, *Dominican Order*, 1: 392.

Dominican statutes.¹⁶ This omission does not mean that the nunnery did not follow Dominican practices, but it does indicate that the nuns in this community were not as solicitous in asserting their Dominican status as some other nunneries were. In 1287, however, the convent was said to be “under the way of life and institutes of the Friars Preachers” in a receipt from the Bolognese bishop’s notary when a representative of the nunnery paid its annual obligation of a pound of wax to the bishop.¹⁷ From these descriptions of San Giovanni Battista, it seems that the nunnery was generally identified as a Dominican house despite the fact that it was not incorporated into the order. Moreover, the varied wording used to describe the convent’s observance points to a lack of standard language for identifying the affiliation of monastic houses. Finally, it raises the possibility of a lack of rigid distinction between Augustinian and Dominican convents, especially for those under episcopal or papal authority.

SANTA MARIA DEL MONTE DELLA GUARDIA AND
SAN MATTIA

San Giovanni Battista was not the only nunnery formed by women from Santissima Trinità di Ronzano. In 1249, ten years after the formation of San Giovanni Battista, Cardinal Legate Ottaviano Ubaldini allowed three women religious named Balena, Dotta, and Marina to transfer from Santissima Trinità to Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia. This arrangement was meant to revive the struggling church, whose foundress, the hermitess Angelica, had died in

¹⁶ “acceptavit regulam beati agustini in monasterio sancti johannis baptiste,” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 6/4490, no. 22.

¹⁷ “sub ordine et institutes fratrum predicatorum,” ASB Dem. San Giovanni Battista, 7/4491, no. 3.

the early 1240s and whose canons had declined in number to only the prior, Alfredo, and one other canon after the death Angelica.¹⁸ Balena became the group's first prioress and served in that capacity until 1271. Alfredo appears to have stayed on the Monte della Guardia and is described in 1250 as their priest and *converso*.¹⁹

The move from Santissima Trinità to the oratory on the Monte della Guardia seems to have involved a quick transition to the observance of the Augustinian Rule. When Cardinal Ottaviano transferred Balena, Dotta, and Marina to the Monte della Guardia, he lamented that the Rule of Saint Augustine had fallen into neglect among the canons there, and expressed faith that the constitutions observed at Santissima Trinità would provide for more rigor in religious observance. He nevertheless absolved the inhabitants of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia from obedience to Ronzano. By 1258, Pope Alexander IV described the foundation as belonging to the Order of Saint Augustine when he renewed the papal privilege that his predecessors had given to Angelica.²⁰ This privilege would remain important to the community. Despite close associations with Teodorico Borgognoni, a Dominican friar and bishop of Cervia, and despite occasional expressed preference for visitation by Dominican officials, the nuns of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia preferred to maintain the independence from any order or bishop that this

¹⁸ The document in which Bishop Ottaviano of Bologna ordered the transfer on August 6, 1249 (ASB Dem., San Mattia, 52/5813, no. 8) is missing from the Archivio di Stato di Bologna, but its cover with a description of the document's contents is there. A copy of the decree is printed in Gozzadini's *Cronaca di Ronzano*, 150–1, document no. 3. Also missing is Alexander IV's papal confirmation of the church's donation to the three women in January 1257.

¹⁹ "Frater Alfredus sacerdos et conversus dicte ecclesie." ASB Dem., San Mattia, 5/5766, no. 6. This is an unusual combination of titles, as a *converso* is usually a lay member of a monastic house who does not participate in the divine offices, but rather does manual labor.

²⁰ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 5/5766, not numbered, January 28, 1258. This document is edited in Gozzadini, *Cronaca di Ronzano*, 132–3.

privilege provided them, only solidifying their relationship to the Dominicans in the fifteenth century.²¹

After establishing the new group of nuns from Santissima Trinità in the church on Monte della Guardia, the community quickly outgrew the small abode and, perhaps drawn in to the increasingly urban tenor of monastic life in that era, decided to begin building a new monastery, called San Mattia, in the suburbs of Bologna. Whereas Santa Maria del Monte was located in the hills southwest of Bologna over a mile outside the walls, San Mattia was just outside the city's southwestern gate, the Porta Saragozza. San Mattia began with a 1254 bequest from a woman named Emma, who left to Santa Maria del Monte a house along with twenty tornatures of land and 20 Bolognese lire to help with the building of a church.²² Though the sisters had acquired a new building, they maintained the old one, and would continue to do so until the community was suppressed in the late eighteenth century.²³

Along with gaining more room for the growing community, one of Balena's concerns was to secure from Pope Alexander IV a confirmation of the privilege Angelica had gained for her oratory. Alexander's grant of this request seems to have applied only to Angelica's original foundation – at this point, there was no mention of San Mattia, and the bull is simply addressed to the “prioress and sisters of the church of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, order

²¹ Teodorico Borgognoni, along with being a Dominican friar and having a series of episcopal appointments, was a surgeon who taught medicine in Bologna. He is thought to be the son of Ugo Borgognoni of Lucca, who was one of the first professors of medicine at Bologna. See Plinio Pioreschi, *A History of Medicine* (Omaha, NE: Horatius Press, 2003), 437–9.

²² ASB Dem., San Mattia, 5/5766, no. 8.

²³ In the fifteenth century, the oratory on the Monte della Guardia became important to the city for its possession of an icon of the Madonna attributed to Saint Luke. The nuns of San Mattia served as guardians of the icon well into the seventeenth century. See Mario Fanti, “La leggenda della Madonna di San Luca di Bologna. Origine, fortuna, sviluppo e valore storico,” in *La Madonna di San Luca in Bologna: otto secoli di storia, di arte, e di fede*, ed. Mario Fanti and Giancarlo Roversi (Bologna: Silvana Editrice, 1993), 69–88.

of Saint Augustine.”²⁴ They must have remained on good terms with the bishop despite seeking to maintain independence from his jurisdiction, because in 1268, Bishop Ottaviano of Bologna sent letters to the bishops of several nearby towns informing them of the new convent and asking them to issue indulgences to the faithful of their diocese, encouraging them to visit San Mattia and to give alms to the nuns there.²⁵

Balena’s successor, Dotta, pressed to extend Maria del Monte’s privilege to San Mattia. To this end, the sisters wrote two letters, probably to the pope, explaining the relationship between the original nunnery and the new one. A letter addressed only to “your reverend Father” from the “prioress and sisters of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, order of Saint Augustine” recounts their history.²⁶ According to this account, when the number of canons at Santa Maria del Monte had dwindled to a number that no longer allowed them to support themselves suitably, the monastery was reformed and Balena, Dotta, and Marina moved there in order to live a more rigorous life. The letter mentioned Alexander’s confirmation of the papal privilege. The sisters argued that because of the large number of newly professed nuns, it was no longer possible for them to live at their original location, thus justifying their move to a house closer to the city. Since they were immediately subject to Rome and not under the jurisdiction of the bishop, they asked the pope to appoint a suitable representative to confirm the election of the prioress and do such things as perform the office of visitation and correction. This

²⁴ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 5/5766, not numbered, dated January 28, 1258.

²⁵ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 52/5813, no. 9. Ottaviano sent his letter to the bishops of Modena, Imola, Faenza, Rimini, and Cervia, all towns in the Romagna. Ecclesiastical officials would often issue indulgences for new foundations or those in need of repairing or rebuilding their monasteries.

²⁶ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 4/5765, not numbered, not dated, beginning “Significant [sic] Reverende Paternitate vestre. Priorissa et sorores sancte marie montis guardie ordinis sancti augustini.”

detail dates the letter to 1271 or earlier, because in September of that year, Pope Gregory X instructed the prior of the Dominican friars in Bologna to confirm Dotta's election.²⁷

A second letter continues to make the case that San Mattia should enjoy the privileges of its sister house. Like the first one, this letter is undated. The only information that helps to date the letter is that Dotta is the prioress, which means that it was written between 1271 and 1296. This second letter asks that San Mattia be exempt from episcopal jurisdiction since the sisters of Maria del Monte della Guardia had it built in order "to serve the Lord under the discipline of the rule more securely, more honestly, and more fittingly."²⁸ They then asked that the prior of the Dominican province of Lombardy or some other suitable Dominican be named as their visitor.

Papal privileges were to be guarded and defended for many reasons. In lawsuits, monasteries could and often did use these kinds of privileges to argue that the bishop and his representatives did not have jurisdiction over their cases, thereby enabling them to find a more favorable forum. They could also avoid paying any exactions that the bishop might charge. Furthermore, in Santa Maria del Monte's case, the privilege exempted them from any sentence of interdict imposed upon the city, an exemption that they employed in 1271. Eight years later, San Mattia received confirmation that their privilege allowed them to continue to hold masses despite an interdict. In some cases, bishops tried to consolidate their power within their dioceses and to establish the right to visit and receive tithes and other fees from monasteries that had claimed papal protection in the past. Religious houses zealously defended themselves and their privileges, and as was the case with Santa Maria and San Mattia appealed

²⁷ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 52/5813, no. 12.

²⁸ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 6/5767, not numbered, not dated, with incipit "Significat sanctitate vestre": "securius, honestius et commodius sub regulari disciplina domino famulari."

often for confirmation that exemptions granted by previous popes would be honored by the current holder of the throne of Peter.²⁹

In the late thirteenth century, the combined convents came under the Dominican sphere of influence. As early as December of 1271, Pope Gregory IX described San Mattia as a part of the Order of Saint Augustine, living according to the institutes of the Friar Preachers.³⁰ The two letters from the prioress and sisters suggest that their association with the Dominicans had grown stronger from the time of the first letter to that of the second. Whereas in the first letter they simply asked for the pope to name a suitable visitor, in the second letter they requested a specific Dominican official, and a relatively high-ranking one at that, the prior of the province of Lombardy.³¹ There is no indication whether San Mattia had already made contact with the provincial himself or other Friar Preachers, or whether in appealing to the pope they were attempting to secure the services of reluctant Dominicans by going over the heads of their order's officials.

A strong link to the Dominicans came through their relationship with Bishop Teodorico Borgognoni of Cervia, who was also a member of the Order of Preachers and who had developed a tie to Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia and San Mattia. The first evidence of contact between Teodorico and Maria del Monte della Guardia was a 1268 indulgence issued at the request of Bishop Ottaviano of Bologna.³² In a sixteenth-century chronicle attributed to the Dominican friar Leandro Alberti, the author stated that the sisters of

²⁹ For examples of other battles between bishops and monasteries claiming exemption, see Brentano, *The Two Churches*, 109–29.

³⁰ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 6/5768, no. 3.

³¹ In addition to priors of individual houses, the Dominicans had priors of provinces. In the late thirteenth century, Lombardy was one of twelve Dominican provinces. Hinnebusch, *Dominican Order*, 1: 175.

³² Ottaviano's request is found in ASB Dem., 52/5813, no. 9. He also requested indulgences from the bishops of Imola, Modena, Favena, and Rimini. Teodorico's indulgence,

San Mattia had received the Dominican habit from Teodorico Borgognoni around 1280.³³ There are no documents in the nunnery's records, however, to verify this claim. The Cervian bishop appears again in the record at the groundbreaking of a new church for San Mattia in 1294, and to confirm the election of a prioress two years later.³⁴ Beyond this tie, as we have seen in Chapter 3, Borgognoni left a considerable bequest to the nuns of San Mattia. They were to buy land that would produce revenue, sending 90 percent of the annual proceeds to the Friar Preachers of Lucca and keeping the remainder for themselves.³⁵

It is probable that in the early fourteenth century this community remained in the Dominican sphere of influence. For example, in 1310, a cardinal legate gave them the right to hear preaching and receive the sacraments from Dominican friars, notwithstanding the statutes that the Order of Preachers had against administering these services to nuns.³⁶ In this document, however, the nunnery is described as being in the Order of Saint Augustine. This does not preclude the

addressed to the cities and dioceses of Cervia and Bologna, is found in ASB Dem., San Mattia, 52/5813, no. 10.

³³ Leandro Alberti, *Chronicetta della Madonna di San Luca* (Venice: Domenico, & Gio. Battista Guerra, 1579), 16. This book focuses on the history of the painting of the Madonna attributed to Saint Luke that came into the possession of the sisters on the Monte della Guardia. As is often the case with documents of this sort, the chronology must be taken with a grain of salt, since Alberti dates the origin of the community on the Monte della Guardia to the early twelfth century, and has them receive the icon at the hands of a pilgrim from Constantinople in 1160. The icon probably dates instead to the fourteenth century, and becomes important to civic religious practice in Bologna in the mid fifteenth century. The detail concerning the convent's reception of the Dominican habit in 1280 does not appear in Alberti's brief 1539 history, but was added to the account in the 1579 publication of the book, which had been augmented by an anonymous "Reverendissimo Religioso." See Danielle Callegari and Shannon McHugh, "'Se fossimo tante meretrici': The Rhetoric of Resistance in Diodata Malvasia's Convent Narrative," *Italian Studies* 66.1 (2011): 31.

³⁴ The 1294 document is ASB Dem., San Mattia, 52/5318, no. 14. The 1296 acts are listed as belonging to ASB Dem., San Mattia, 52/5318, no. 15, but both documents are missing.

³⁵ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 1/5762, nos. 3, 12–13. See Chapter 2, p. 78.

³⁶ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 8/5769, not numbered, dated December 21, 1310: "nos volentes annuere votis vestris quod possitis per fratres ordinis predicatorum in monasterio vestro

possibility that the sisters considered themselves Dominicans at this point – as we have seen in the case of San Giovanni Battista, some nunneries that identified strongly with the Order of Preachers were sometimes described in terms of the basic rule that they followed, which, as was the case with the friars, was the Rule of Augustine. Though they might at some times have been described as “under the care of the Friar Preachers” or in the “Order of Saint Augustine following the institutes of the Friar Preachers,”³⁷ in many cases this additional information was not included. Thus, this bull can be read to indicate that San Mattia and Santa Maria del Monte desired and may have received continued care from Dominican friars.

Whatever their spiritual affiliation might have been, the nuns continued to emphasize their direct protection by the Roman See. In 1330, the sisters protested against a delegation of visitors that they felt were acting in some other capacity than as representatives of the pope. This delegation included two Dominican friars along with the abbot of a Benedictine house in the diocese of Bologna. In 1359, they elected a new abbess, and needed a male cleric to oversee the election. The record of this election includes a negotiation with an Augustinian canon from Santa Maria di Reno and San Salvatore, allowing him to oversee the election, but assuring that he recognized the status of the nuns as immediately subject to the Pope. Two Dominican friars attended the election, but did so as witnesses.³⁸

The participation of Augustinian canons in the 1359 election, combined with the role that an Augustinian canon played in an earlier

proponi, facere verbum dei et ab eiusdem fratribus recipere ecclesiastica sacramenta qui quotiens expedierit, confessiones vestras audiant et super hijs vestre formam ecclesie beneficium absolutionis impendant . . . constitutionibus vestri ordinis seu aliquibus statutis per magistrum generalem dicti ordinis predicatorum in contrarium creditis . . . non obstantibus.”

³⁷ Lehmijoki-Gardner, “Dominican Order,” 223.

³⁸ ASB Dem., 9/5770, not numbered, dated October 5, 1360.

event, give weight to the possibility that the combined nunneries may have been considered Augustinian houses for some portion of the fourteenth century. In 1324, the prioress and two sisters were sentenced to do penance – the two sisters for leaving the nunnery, and the prioress for negligence in performing her office. The cleric delegated to oversee the penance was a Brother Peter from San Michele in Bosco – at that time an Augustinian house – who was also the penitentiary of the Bolognese bishop.³⁹ Peter is described as being of the same order (*eiusdem ordinis*) as the sisters.⁴⁰

In the fifteenth century, Dominican friars appeared more frequently in the convent records, but these interactions were not always signs of concord between the sisters and friars. On the one hand, in 1426, Dominican friars from the nearby church of San Domenico presided over and witnessed the election of a new prioress, without any sign of any negotiation over the authority of the friars to do this.⁴¹ However, from the 1420s through the 1440s, the nuns of San Mattia and Santa Maria del Monte came into conflict with the friars of San Romano in Lucca over the inheritance from Teodorico Borgognoni. The Luccan friars on several occasions sent representatives to collect money from the nuns, and in 1444 threatened the sisters with a penalty of 100 lire for continued failure to pay.⁴² This does not bear substantially on the question of whether the nunnery considered itself Dominican at this point. A similar dispute arose between the nunnery of Sant'Agnese, a Bolognese nunnery with a strong historic tie to the Order of Preachers, and several communities of friars in Rome, Florence, and Bologna over the heredit of Cardinal Matteo Orsini.

³⁹ See Foschi, "Gli ordini religiosi," 2: 485.

⁴⁰ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 8/5769, not numbered, dated September 27, 1324.

⁴¹ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 11/5772, not numbered, dated November 13, 1426.

⁴² ASB Dem., San Mattia, 1/5762, no. 13.

The relationship between the Dominicans and San Mattia remained unofficial for centuries until Pope Alexander VI ordered the nuns to submit to the Order of Preachers in 1496.⁴³ By this time, the convent had become known as the protector of the Madonna di San Luca, an icon attributed to Saint Luke, which first emerged as a central element of Bolognese civic piety in 1433. The nuns at the oratory on the Monte della Guardia kept the icon and welcomed pilgrims, while a confraternity was charged with processing the image through the city in response to natural disasters and impending armies, as well as at the beginning of the city council's annual deliberations.⁴⁴ The growing importance of the nunnery in the city may have led Alexander VI to solidify the relationship of the nunnery to the Dominican Order, or may have made the convent more attractive to the order as a whole. Santa Maria del Monte and San Mattia's long path to incorporation in the Dominican Order demonstrates that some nunneries preferred an informal relationship to a monastic order rather than seeking incorporation.

SANTA CATERINA DI QUARTO

Another house that came very gradually into the Dominican sphere of influence is Santa Caterina di Quarto, which was originally located a few miles outside of Bologna but moved inside the city walls in the 1290s. Throughout the thirteenth century, this ascetic community included both men and women. In 1247, Innocent IV agreed to take Santa Caterina under papal protection and stipulated that in return, the group should follow the Rule of Saint Augustine.⁴⁵ Up to this point, the community had followed its own rule. No copies

⁴³ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 14/5775, not numbered, dated November 6, 1496.

⁴⁴ Fanti, "La leggenda della Madonna di San Luca," 69–88.

⁴⁵ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 3/4487, no. 29.

survive in the monastery's archives, but the rule probably existed in written form because a visitation record mentions that the house's institutes were read aloud to the clerics at dinner. This rule was probably the basis for some of the monastery's atypical practices, such as abstinence from meat and eschewing of comforts such as beds, which are not a part of the Rule of Saint Augustine but which Santa Caterina di Quarto continued to embrace well after 1247.⁴⁶ In the mid thirteenth century, communities in Cremona, Brescia, and Ferrara adopted Santa Caterina's Rule and submitted to the authority of its prior, leading the community to consider itself the head of its own small order.⁴⁷

In 1250, Innocent IV assigned the abbot of San Procolo, a Benedictine monastery in Bologna, to look into the situation of Santa Caterina. After receiving his preliminary report that a large number of men and women were present in that community, the pope ordered a more thorough inspection. He sent the bishop of Ferrara, the abbot of Columba, and the archdeacon of Bologna to visit the monastery and charged them with ascertaining whether its inhabitants were living according to the Augustinian Rule and especially with making sure that men and women lived in separate dormitories. The visitors attempted to relocate the women to San Giovanni di Castenaso, a nearby church. They tried unsuccessfully to convince the patrons of that church to allow the sisters to live there. The visitors decided, "forced as if by a certain necessity, that they both would live in the church of Santa Caterina under one pastor, but separated from one another in different houses."⁴⁸ The inability to

⁴⁶ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 5/4489, no. 15. For more on changes to Santa Caterina's rules and statutes, see Chapter 5, pp. 182–9.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 1, pp. 36–42.

⁴⁸ "quasi quadam necessitate compulsi ut in ecclesia Sancte Caterine sub uno pastore divisim tamen domibus et abinvicem separatis pariter habetis." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 4/4488, no. 12.

move the women to another location did not seem to have cost the community papal support. The group had apparently complained that the bishop was exacting excessive fees from them, and the visitors recommended that the pope confirm his protection of the house. Innocent decreed that the bishop and his successors could not receive more than a pound of wax per year from the house.⁴⁹

The events of the visitation suggest that the visitors were reasonably satisfied at this point with the manner in which the inhabitants of Santa Caterina conducted their lives. Though Innocent had already united several Augustinian communities in 1244, when he placed Santa Caterina under the Augustinian Rule in 1247 he does not appear to have included them in the Order of the Augustinian Hermits, since a nearby bishop, an abbot who was probably from a Cistercian house, and the archdeacon made up the visitation committee appointed by the pope on an ad hoc basis after the report of a local Benedictine abbot tasked with visiting the community raised concern. If there had been any changes in the community's practices after Innocent made them Augustinian three years before, there is no evidence for it in this document. As was the case with Santa Maria del Monte, more important to the group was the protection of the papacy, which would allow them to limit their obligations to the bishop.

The next visitation would not be far away. In 1259, Pope Alexander IV wrote to the canon lawyer and papal legate Henry of Segusio, commissioning him to look into two issues. The first concern was the population of the monastery and whether the community's resources were sufficient to allow them to accept additional members. Second, Henry was to investigate whether Santa Caterina was continuing to follow the earlier customs of their house, either in addition to or in conflict with the Rule of Saint Augustine. Henry

⁴⁹ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 4/4488, no. 12.

entrusted this task to the prior of San Michele in Bosco, a local Augustinian house that was not affiliated with the Augustinian Hermits, but rather was subject to the bishop of Bologna.⁵⁰ The report led Henry to decide that the house could exceed the established limits for men (eight clerics and twenty-five laymen), but that the number of sisters should not be more than sixty.

Regarding the practices of Santa Caterina that were not contained in the Rule of Saint Augustine, Henry made several changes, mostly aimed at moderating some of the more ascetic practices. Under Santa Caterina's statutes, the clerics dined separately from the laymen; they were ordered instead to dine together. Though neither the sisters nor the friars slept in beds, they were given permission to do so when traveling outside of the monastery.

In 1291, the community built a new house inside Bologna in the parish of Santa Maria Maddalena, coinciding with a change in character of the community from a rural double house to an urban nunnery. By this time, there were only a few men left. The prior of the monastery became the parish priest for Santa Maria Maddalena, and the convent was from this point sometimes called by its original name, sometimes called Santa Maria Maddalena, and frequently referred to by both names combined. Though for a short time correspondence to the monastery continued to be addressed to the brothers and sisters of Santa Caterina and Santa Maria Maddalena, the house soon came to be seen as a community of religious women. Perhaps because of the continuing presence of the prior, Santa Caterina was much slower than many other Augustinian houses in seeking the aid of Dominicans or adopting their statutes.

The process by which Santa Caterina came to be associated with the Dominican Order is obscure. In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, existing records do not describe the observance

⁵⁰ Foschi, "Gli ordini religiosi," 2: 481.

or affiliation of the nunnery, nor is there mention of a continuing association with the daughter houses after 1375, when the community sent a new prior to its daughter house in Cremona, Santa Maria di Valverde, after first accepting him as a brother in Santa Caterina.⁵¹

The first strong indication of Dominican observance is in 1451, when six women made their professions in Santa Caterina. They promised to live “according to the Rule of the Blessed Augustine and the institutes of our monastery, confirmed and approved by Pope Honorius of happy memory.”⁵² The most likely meaning of this is that the nunnery observed the Dominican statutes, which had been approved by Pope Honorius III in 1216, since there is no alternative constitution from Santa Caterina that could have been confirmed by any pope named Honorius.

By 1468, it is clear that the nunnery was recognized as Dominican. In that year, a papal legate and governor of Bologna ordered the union of Santa Caterina with another Dominican house, San Giovanni Battista. This union seems to have occurred because of a petition of the nuns of Santa Caterina, who argued that their monastery was in poor physical condition and moreover too small to accommodate its population. The sisters asked to be united with another community that had a larger, better building, and chose San Giovanni Battista, citing the fact that the nuns there were of the same order and habit, in addition to noting the small population of that house (three nuns) and alleging laxity in their observance.⁵³

⁵¹ “Ego Frater Lucchinus praedictus facio professionem et pronunto [sic] obedienciam deo et Beate Marie Virgini gloriose ac sancta caterina et sancta marie Magdalene et tibi fratri . . . priori quod ero obediens secundum regulam sancti augustini tibi tuisque successoribus.” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 12/4496, no. 23, fol. 1r.

⁵² “iuxta regulam beati Augustini et Institutiones nostrum monasterium confirmatas et approbatas per felicis recordationis Onorium papam.” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 17/4501, no. 5.

⁵³ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 17/4501, no. 21. For more on this union, see Chapter 6, pp. 215–18.

Though the three nuns from San Giovanni Battista protested the union and claimed that charges made against them were false, the nuns of Santa Caterina transferred to San Giovanni Battista and their community became known by the name of their new nunnery.⁵⁴ When the union was carried out over their objections, the nuns who had been living in San Giovanni Battista transferred to another Dominican nunnery in Bologna, San Pietro Martire. Later chronicles of San Giovanni Battista and Santa Caterina would emphasize the early association of Santa Caterina's founder with Saint Dominic, claiming that the affiliation of Santa Caterina with the Order of Preachers in the fifteenth century was a return to its origins.

Recent scholarship on religious women in the Dominican sphere of influence indicates that the path traveled by these three convents is not unique. Studies of communities in German-speaking lands demonstrate that communities of religious women that were founded as beguine or penitent houses could become Dominican over time. Conversely, convents that were Dominican from the beginning and were incorporated into the order could later reject their Dominican status.

In her study of German Sister-Books, Gertrud Jaron Lewis examines nine communities that came to identify with the Dominican Order, though in each case these houses emerged from small houses of penitent women or beguines. Most of these groups adopted the Rule of Saint Augustine early in their histories, and were incorporated into the Dominican Order in the 1240s under Pope Innocent IV.⁵⁵ While these German communities solidified their associations

⁵⁴ The three nuns who were living in San Giovanni Battista before the union argued that the action was invalid because it occurred against their will. They also claimed that Santa Caterina's petition included falsehoods. They left their nunnery and transferred to yet another Dominican house, San Pietro Martire.

⁵⁵ Lewis, *By Women, for Women*, 10–31. On the Sister-Books, see also Ursula Peters, *Religiöse Erfahrung als literarisches Faktum: Zur Vorgeschichte und Genese frauenmystischer Texte des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1988), especially 129–35,

with Dominicans much earlier than either Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia or Santa Caterina, the Sister-Books show that the strength of the relationship between religious women's communities and the Dominican Order fluctuated. Nuns relied on older sisters for spiritual counsel and at times ignored or rejected the orders of the friars who served as their superiors.⁵⁶

In contrast to the gradual integration of nunneries into the Dominican Order demonstrated in Jaron Lewis's work, Sigrid Schmitt Hirbodan's study of religious women in Strasbourg demonstrates that the relationship between incorporated convents and the Dominican Order could remain uneasy. The seven Dominican convents in Strasbourg were all incorporated into the order in 1245.⁵⁷ While their Dominican brothers left the city during an interdict in the 1280s, the nuns disobeyed the directives from the order's provincial officials to cease contact with their families and other individuals to whom the interdict applied.⁵⁸ This was a mild rebellion in comparison with the attempt of three of the city's seven Dominican convents to secede from the order in the 1370s, objecting to the friars' demands that they pay for the dispensing of sacraments and claiming that their confessors dressed inappropriately and attempted to seduce members of the community. They left their convents for six years in an effort to be free from the order and to become houses of Augustinian canonesses under the bishop's supervision.⁵⁹ Though they were all brought back into the order in 1377, one of the houses, St. Marx, eventually did succeed in severing their ties to the order and becoming a house of canonesses under the bishop's authority in the early sixteenth century.⁶⁰ The cases in this study demonstrate that contrary to the assumption that the orders looked for ways to

and Siegfried Ringler, *Viten- und Offenbarungsliteratur in Frauenklöstern des Mittelalters: Quellen und Studien* (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1980).

⁵⁶ Lewis, *By Women, for Women*, 89–99.

⁵⁷ Schmitt, "Geistliche Frauen," 41.

⁵⁸ Schmitt, "Geistliche Frauen," 48–50.

⁵⁹ Schmitt, "Geistliche Frauen," 147–77.

⁶⁰ Schmitt, "Geistliche Frauen," 302.

free themselves of the care of nuns, in cases where the nuns initiated attempts to leave the order, the friars could resist the nuns' attempt to leave.

In Italy, Guido Cariboni has demonstrated the diverse origins and histories of women's houses later associated with the Dominican Order. For example, the Milanese community dedicated to Sant'Agnese is described in some early documents as a house of Humiliati, though it is also classified as a convent of the canonical Order of Saint Augustine. Bernard Gui lists it among women's monasteries that are Dominican but not incorporated – that is, under the jurisdiction of the local bishop. In sum, as Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner finds:

throughout the Middle Ages, both nuns and religious laywomen typically lived under *ad hoc* arrangements, if not an institutional limbo. Women's religious communities, even ones that at some point were incorporated into a religious order, had to seek repeatedly for reaffirmation of their status from ecclesiastical and secular leaders, superiors of religious orders, and the popes.⁶¹

Rather than petitioning for incorporation, Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia and Santa Caterina are examples of women's monastic communities that cultivated this "institutional limbo." San Giovanni Battista developed an early and relatively consistent tie to the Dominicans, but remained under the bishop's jurisdiction, with no indication in its archival records that it sought clearer ties.

SANT'ORSOLINA AND SAN LORENZO: THE RULE OF
SAINT AUGUSTINE IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

San Giovanni Battista, Santa Caterina, and San Mattia are the best-documented cases of a common trend in late medieval Bologna –

⁶¹ Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner, "The Women Behind their Saints: Dominican Women's Institutional Uses of the Cults of their Religious Companions," in *Images of Medieval Sanctity: Essays in Honour of Gary Dickson*, ed. Debra Strickland (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 5.

houses that were based on the Rule of Saint Augustine in the thirteenth century and that survived until the early fifteenth century were very likely to have become Dominican convents, whether or not that identity involved official recognition from the order.⁶² By 1400, only two such convents – Sant’Orsolina and San Lorenzo – continued to use the Augustinian Rule without integration into a centralized order. Though extant records suggest a relatively uneventful history for these two communities to this point, the fifteenth century would see substantial changes for each of these convents as a result of the church reform program of Bishop Niccolò Albergati, himself a dedicated Carthusian monk, along with the political turmoil in Bologna at that time.

Whether because there was little cause for ecclesiastical investigations of the kind that leave a written trail or because of the loss of records following the displacement of the communities in the fifteenth century, there is little information on the religious practices of Sant’Orsolina and San Lorenzo in the early years of their communities. For both convents, the earliest mention of their existence is a 1259 donation of grain and alms from the city government, recorded in the city’s statutes from that year.⁶³ Though the archives of San Lorenzo have periodic records of oblations and property transactions in the intervening centuries, few records from before 1400 survive for Sant’Orsolina.

In the fifteenth century, however, Sant’Orsolina became the subject of ecclesiastical focus because of several different factors. In

⁶² Of the Augustinian convents that had been founded in the thirteenth century, six had become Dominican by the fifteenth century and four had been disbanded or merged with other communities.

⁶³ The first records of the existence of both of these communities were in statutes of the City of Bologna in 1259. In this year, both communities received donations of grain and money from the city council. Luigi Frati, ed., *Statuti di Bologna dall’anno 1245 all’anno 1267* (Bologna: Regia Tipografia, 1869), 1: 41–52.

January 1424, the bishop's vicar allowed four women to transfer to Sant'Orsolina. Lasia Roncastaldi is listed as the prioress who accepted their professions.⁶⁴ By January the following year, Lasia left Sant'Orsolina, along with two other nuns, transferring to Santa Maria delle Convertite, a penitent house following the Rule of Saint Augustine.⁶⁵ Lasia soon left this new house, this time without authorization from the bishop or other officials.⁶⁶

The years after Lasia's departure were a time of continued turmoil for the monastery, bringing both changes in Sant'Orsolina's monastic authority and in location. Perhaps because of the loss of the prioress and the upheaval in the monastery, Albergati endeavored to reform the Augustinian house in 1426 by placing it under the authority of another Augustinian house in Pavia, Santa Maria Annunciata. The bull from Martin V ordering this move stated that the "Bishop of Bologna, intending that regular observance be in force in that monastery, corrected and reformed many things that needed correction and reform." According to the bull, after consulting with Bishop Niccolò, the nuns "desired to wear the habit that the aforesaid nuns of the Monastery of the Annunciation are accustomed to wear."⁶⁷ Though Pope Martin V's bull presents this action as a choice made by the remaining sisters of Sant'Orsolina with the advice of Bishop Niccolò, the association would not endure. This may have been because of the lack of a true voluntary association between Sant'Orsolina and the Augustinian monastery in Pavia, or perhaps because of conflict that arose between the two houses, though there is no precise record of these things in the archives.

⁶⁴ ASB Dem., San Lorenzo, 8/3376, no. 10.

⁶⁵ ASB Dem., San Lorenzo, 8/3376, no. 15.

⁶⁶ ASB Dem., San Lorenzo, 8/3376, no. 17.

⁶⁷ "habitum per Moniales prefati Monasteri de Annunciate gestari solitum gestare desiderant." ASB Dem., San Lorenzo, 9/3377, no. 3.

Another potential explanation for the break from Santa Maria Annunciata is that church officials, or perhaps the sisters themselves, found an alternative source of authority and spiritual care nearby, particularly after the nuns were forced to abandon their suburban convent and moved into town. In 1428, Sant'Orsolina's monastery was severely damaged, probably as a result of factional fighting between the papacy and a coalition of noble Bolognese families, during which Albergati fled the city for a short time.⁶⁸ After taking refuge in rented housing near San Giovanni in Monte, in 1431, Sant'Orsolina requested and received permission to unite with the Augustinian convent of San Lorenzo.⁶⁹ This union left only one Augustinian nunnery in Bologna.

Following the death in 1473 of Catherine, who had been sent from Santa Maria Annunciata to serve as prioress of the community and to help with Niccolò Albergati's reforms, the nuns of Sant'Orsolina living in San Lorenzo petitioned to be allowed "to return to their earlier habit."⁷⁰ This request was approved by Pope Sixtus IV, who also ordered the canons of San Giovanni in Monte to provide the sisters with priests to hear their confessions and to administer other sacraments.⁷¹ Sixtus IV maintained the duty of the canons to care for the nearby nuns in 1484, in the face of an apparent attempt of the canons to divest themselves of this duty.

The cases of San Lorenzo and Sant'Orsolina point to the decreasing number of autonomous convents in Bologna. Bishop Niccolò Albergati placed Sant'Orsolina under the authority of a trusted

⁶⁸ Nicholas Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 31.

⁶⁹ This union was the source of conflict between the community of Sant'Orsolina and the few remaining nuns at San Lorenzo, who transferred to a Cistercian nunnery across the street. See Chapter 6, pp. 211–12.

⁷⁰ "as pristinum habitum redire", ASB Dem., San Lorenzo, 13/3381, no. 14.

⁷¹ ASB Dem., San Lorenzo, 13/3381, no. 15.

convent in another city, and Pope Sixtus IV required a nearby house of canons, now integrated into Albergati's newly formed Congregation of Lateran Canons, to provide religious care for the community at San Lorenzo. The attempt of the canons of San Giovanni in Monte to reject the care of nuns demonstrates that some religious men still balked at the mandate to provide spiritual care of nuns, but Sixtus's refusal to grant their request shows the continued norm of integrating religious women into organized congregations and orders.

FLUCTUATIONS BETWEEN AUGUSTINIAN AND
BENEDICTINE

Many of the nunneries discussed so far had some changes in their observance, or for some period of time occupied space in the interstices of the orders. Some communities underwent more pronounced change than others, demonstrating the fluidity of monastic life. Two such houses were San Nicolò di Carpineta, originally a Benedictine nunnery, and San Guglielmo, a Cistercian house.

San Nicolò di Carpineta was founded around 1264 as a Benedictine house. Unlike other new Benedictine monasteries in Bologna around the middle of the thirteenth century, there is no sign that it adopted the Cistercian constitution. In that year, three sisters professed the Rule of Saint Benedict. All were daughters of a man about whom nothing is known but his name, Auliviero. The sisters made their vow to the prior of Santa Maria Nova di Treviso, but came under the protection and supervision of San Nicolò di Lido di Venezia.⁷²

The first residence of these sisters was outside the city walls, near the Porta Maggiore on the southeast side of town. They lived there until the last decade of the thirteenth century, when they moved to a

⁷² Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 213.

monastery inside the walls, near the Campo del Mercato. This new house had been the abode of the Carmelites of San Nicolò di Avesa, which the friars abandoned in 1292 to move to a new monastery. The sisters of San Nicolò were living in their new abode by 1297.⁷³ By 1306, there were thirteen women living in the monastery, now known as San Nicolò di Campo del Mercato.⁷⁴

Sometime during the early years of the fourteenth century, the sisters of San Nicolò decided to abandon the Rule of Saint Benedict and follow instead the Rule of Saint Augustine. Three separate documents from December 1317 describe San Nicolò as belonging to the Order of Saint Augustine. These documents also list the names of the ten inhabitants of the house.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, since the records that exist from this period are all property transactions, it is not possible to determine the reason for the change in rule. The community of San Nicolò would soon experience a greater change. By 1322, the new monastery was ruined when the Aposa River flooded its banks. At this time, the sisters chose to unite with another nunnery, San Guglielmo, which followed the Rule of Saint Benedict and the constitution of the Cistercians.⁷⁶

San Guglielmo, however, did not remain Cistercian, and in the fifteenth century underwent substantial vacillations in order affiliation. Though the nuns there followed the Rule of Saint Benedict throughout the fourteenth century, probably encompassing the lifespan of

⁷³ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 212–13, n. 246. Zarri uses ASB Dem., 1/3483, no. 1 in the archive of S. Martino, the friar's new monastery, for the last date the friars were living in San Nicolò di Avesa and ASB Dem., 2/3484, no. 31 to approximate the date of the arrival of the sisters at the church.

⁷⁴ ASB Dem., San Guglielmo, 1/735, no. 15. The new monastery was next to the Campo del Mercato, and from this point on San Nicolò di Carpineta is also referred to as San Nicolò di Campo del Mercato.

⁷⁵ ASB Dem., San Guglielmo, 1/735, nos. 21–3.

⁷⁶ "Priorissa sorores et conventus cupiant ad beati benedicti regulam se tranferre ut in ipsam austeriorem vitam ducentes et Christo ipsarum celesti sponso humiliter famulantes." ASB Dem., San Guglielmo, 1/735, no. 34.

the women who chose to unite with the house in part because of its Benedictine observance, sometime in the early fifteenth century San Guglielmo became Augustinian. The documents from this period do not indicate a reason for the change.⁷⁷ By 1460, San Guglielmo had again taken up the Benedictine Rule, and there is some indication that they once again came to identify with the Cistercian Order.⁷⁸ Finally, in 1506, they were reformed by the combined Dominican house of San Giovanni Battista and Santa Caterina. From this point on, they remained Dominican until their suppression in 1799 during the Napoleonic invasion.⁷⁹ Though San Guglielmo is an unusual case because of the frequency of change in rule and order, it is a reminder that observance and affiliation in some communities could remain quite fluid. Church officials did not seem reluctant to approve or impose such changes.

WOMEN AND RELIGIOUS ORDERS IN THE LATER
MIDDLE AGES

Studies of religious women's communities whose relationship to monastic orders changed over time can contribute to recent re-evaluations of the narrative of decline in women's monasticism. For over a decade, scholars have questioned the earlier idea that the Gregorian reform led to the marginalization of religious women. Contrary to the idea of decline, for France and England Bruce Venarde has found an increase in the rate of new foundations in the mid twelfth century. This is followed by a healthy, though slower, rate of new establishments through the mid thirteenth century.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ ASB Dem., San Guglielmo, 3/737, no. 23.

⁷⁸ ASB Dem., San Guglielmo, 4/738, no. 2.

⁷⁹ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 187.

⁸⁰ Bruce Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890–1215* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

In Bologna, the number of convents quadrupled over the course of the thirteenth century, with approximately thirty-five convents in the city by the year 1300. Some of this growth was driven by the emergence of the new mendicant orders, though some new houses were independent communities following the Augustinian and other rules, such as those of San Marco of Mantua and Santa Caterina. Inclusion of Italy in assessments of the state of women's monasticism as represented by the rate and affiliation of new foundations would strengthen the conclusion that the twelfth century did not mark the beginning of a clear decline for religious women.

Scholars have also seen the presence of double monasteries as an indicator of the status of religious women. The Premonstratensian, Fontevrist, and Gilbertine Orders all originated in the early twelfth century as congregations of double monasteries, though with varying organizational structures.⁸¹ Robert of Arbrissel, founder of Fontevraud, has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention, particularly as an example of a religious man who saw care of religious women as central to his mission.⁸² Though these studies make clear that some religious leaders considered the care of religious women an important part of their duty, criticism of this way of life and the gradual expulsion of women from the Premonstratensian Order over the course of the twelfth century have seemed to provide evidence that this form of monasticism was a hallmark of the early twelfth century, but was strongly discouraged from the mid

⁸¹ Penny Schine Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (University of Chicago Press, 1985); Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society*, 7–16; Sharon Elkins, "The Emergence of a Gilbertine Identity," in *Distant Echoes: Medieval Religious Life for Women*, vol. 1: *Distant Echoes*, ed. John A. Nichols and Lillian Shank (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 169–82.

⁸² See Jacques Dalarun, *Robert of Arbrissel: Sex, Sin and Salvation in the Middle Ages*, trans. Bruce Venarde (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006); Mews, "Negotiating the Boundaries of Gender," 113–48; Griffiths, "The Cross and the *Cura monialium*," 303–30.

twelfth century and after. The evidence from Bologna demonstrates that it was possible to found communities that included men and women later than a focus on Premontre and Fontevraud would suggest. Though Santa Caterina's congregation was small, its existence demonstrates that new groups following this way of life could be established in the thirteenth century, and that these double monasteries could be well regarded by clerical officials and be attractive models for nearby communities to follow.

Examining changes in a city's monastic community across orders also raises questions about what it meant to be part of a monastic order in the High and late Middle Ages. Though the growing norm for monastic life was the idea of an order as a centralized structure with the ability to found, accept, or reject potential member houses and to regulate member communities, an older form of monastic life remained. In this way of life, relatively autonomous communities or small congregations remained under the jurisdiction of the local bishop. Though the monastic reforms that emerged from the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 mandated a move toward central organization and regulation, as is often the case the implementation of this reform was a long-term process, continuing sporadically through the fifteenth century.

Evidence from the records of monastic houses in Bologna suggests that the older, more autonomous and local model of monastic life persisted alongside the development of new centralized religious orders. Though some communities had clear and stable relationships with new mendicant movements such as the Franciscans and Dominicans or Benedictine reform orders such as the Camaldolese and Cistercians, some convents seem primarily to have seen themselves as individual monastic communities following the Benedictine or Augustinian Rules, without seeking inclusion in larger monastic congregations or orders for much of their histories. In some cases,

convents changed rule and order. A few actively sought to maintain autonomy for much of their histories. Though participation in a monastic order that approved and regulated member houses was increasingly held up as the ideal, some communities did not quickly adopt this version of monastic life.

CONCLUSIONS

By studying religious women's houses that did not fit into well-known monastic orders or that changed their rule or status over time, we can get a more complete view of women's monastic life in the High and late Middle Ages. Studies of the formation of women's monastic identity have centered on the nuns' struggle to gain acceptance into religious orders. This scholarship has necessarily focused on nunneries that identified strongly with large, male-centered monastic orders. While these studies elucidate an important element of religious women's lives, they may lead to a picture that overestimates the extent to which communities of religious women in general desired incorporation or similar close ties to the authority structure of large monastic orders. Some convents had more fluid affiliations. A considerable variety of forms of religious life outside of larger orders continued well into the fifteenth century, and some communities of religious women such as Santa Caterina and the combined houses of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia and San Mattia emphasized their autonomy rather than fighting for inclusion in larger groups. San Lorenzo and Sant'Orsolina remained independent Augustinian houses until the fifteenth century, and San Nicolò di Campo del Mercato and San Guglielmo fluctuated between Augustinian and Benedictine observance. Meanwhile, San Giovanni Battista formed an early tie to the Dominican Order, despite the fact that they were

not incorporated into the order and remained under the bishop's jurisdiction.

Tracing the changes in the status of these communities points to the difficulty of ascertaining the religious affiliation of some women's houses – transitions can be difficult to detect, and associations with particular orders may not persist. Though ecclesiastical officials sometimes mentioned the rule and order of nunneries in letters and bulls in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and began to do so more frequently by the late fourteenth century, this practice remained sporadic and incomplete. This transition over time demonstrates the growing importance in monastic life of participation in a large monastic order. It also suggests that the reforms of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were implemented only over a long period of time, and that the organization of monastic life remained in flux two centuries after the Fourth Lateran Council.

Nunneries and civic life

In 1327, the city of Bologna surrendered its government to the papacy, and Pope John XXII's nephew, Cardinal Legate Bertrand de Pouget, came to Bologna to serve as the city's governor. Among many other actions that angered the citizens of Bologna, in 1332 Bertrand suppressed seven convents and attempted to use the wealth of these communities to fund the establishment of four collegiate churches. It is probable that this action was part of a strategy for laying ground work for establishing an Italian center of papal power outside of Rome.¹

Bertrand's hold on power lasted for another two years. After his expulsion from Bologna and the re-establishment of the city council, members of six of these seven convents sought to revive their houses and to recover the property associated with them. Perhaps perceiving that normal ecclesiastical channels would not be friendly to this request, they instead petitioned the city council for the right to return to their old monasteries. The city council approved these requests. Though six houses were re-established during this period of local rule, a successive period of papal rule would see the suppression of five of these convents, with only one surviving through the period of the Middle Ages.

¹ Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities*, 6.

The strategic choice of these convents to appeal to the city government to overturn a cardinal's decision to suppress them demonstrates the extent to which religious institutions were part of the fabric of the city. In the thirteenth century, provisions for supporting religious institutions with money and grain had been part of the city's statutes, placed in the podesta's oath along with upkeep of the city's canals and walls. As Richard Trexler observed in his study of women's monastic life in Florence, to a burgher of the late medieval or early modern period, "the good state of the commune appeared guaranteed as long as the area within the walls and in the nearby environs contained the incorporated City of God."² Those who governed the city and allocated its resources valued the prayers of religious men and women. Nuns could argue that their poverty justified exemptions from city taxes, and that their prayers were "more valuable than two thousand horses."³

In this chapter, I shall investigate two examples of the local government's influence on monastic life: the city government's distribution of alms of grain and money to favored houses in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the suppression of nunneries by papal governors in the fourteenth century. In this era, the leaders of the republican government showed support for religious women, perhaps in an effort to ensure the welfare of their daughters in the city's convents. Religious women did not fare as well under periods of papal government in the fourteenth century, during which several convents were suppressed in order to transfer their property to other religious groups, particularly the four collegiate churches that governing cardinals aimed to create. Through donations to pious organizations, the city leaders demonstrated that they viewed

² Richard Trexler, "Celibacy in the Renaissance: The Nuns of Florence," in *The Women of Renaissance Florence*, 6.

³ Trexler, "Nuns of Florence," 6.

the support of religious communities dedicated to prayer, preaching, and charity to be an important part of the city infrastructure. This applied to communities of both men and women. Support for religious women was especially robust in the thirteenth century, though it continued in smaller amounts in the fourteenth century. The generosity of thirteenth-century donations may be explained by the enthusiasm for the establishment of new foundations in that era, which tapered substantially in the later years of that century before coming nearly to a halt in the fourteenth century.

Shifting religious priorities of the city can be seen in the changes in patterns of giving. In the middle decades of the thirteenth century, the city demonstrated broad-based support to houses of religious women. By the end of the century, though the city continued to provide nunneries with donations of grain – and occasionally monetary gifts – support to houses of mendicant friars dominated the statutes of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. From 1288 through the late fourteenth century, the city provided semi-annual donations to the mendicant churches (one in each quarter of the city) that had become important civic institutions. By the mid fourteenth century, donations were also given to long-established Benedictine and Augustinian houses that had been left out of donation in earlier eras. This marks a shift from an emphasis on building new religious infrastructure to supporting established institutions with long-term influence in the city and perhaps indicates decreasing distinction between communities formed in the age of the *popolo* and those that represent an earlier age of noble influence. As the city moved toward distributing alms to more houses of religious men, in the fourteenth century, fewer convents were recipients of civic aid. In an era of little growth, the city decreased its donations to houses of religious women and concentrated its resources on primarily male institutions

that were important parts of the religious culture of the city's quarters and neighborhoods. The donations from the city government supplemented other sources of income such as dowries (for religious women), donations for masses, and other sources of patronage by families and individuals. They demonstrate that the city fathers saw benefit in providing aid to religious houses.

CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT AND THE CITY'S STATUTES

The statutes of the *popolo* government in the middle decades of the thirteenth century show the dedication of the city fathers to supporting the building and sustenance of recently founded houses, though older Benedictine houses that originated in the era characterized by aristocratic dominance of city government were left out of communal largesse. As was the case in many Italian city-states, the thirteenth century in Bologna was a vibrant and turbulent age that saw the rise of the mendicant orders in the early thirteenth century as well as the beginning of the *popolo* government.

The era of expansion in the monastic community corresponds with Bologna's *secolo d'oro* in the thirteenth century.⁴ With the establishment of the Studium in the late eleventh century, the First Lombard League's defeat of Frederick Barbarossa in the mid twelfth century, and the development of a communal government, Bologna became a prosperous city with influence in the region. In the era of the aristocratic consular government, a consortium of nobles invested in the city's infrastructure, including mills, canals, and the second ring of walls.

⁴ For an overview of civic life in Bologna during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Shona Kelly Wray, *Communities in Crisis: Bologna during the Black Death* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), especially 57–98.

By the end of the twelfth century, members of the upper guilds such as the merchants and bankers had managed to enter the ranks of the consuls. By 1228, the combined *popolo* – the upper and lower guilds – made common cause, and along with some allies in the petty nobility saw their chance to strike in the wake of the nobles' defeat in a war against Modena. A merchant named Giuseppe Toschi led an attack on the *palazzo comunale*, destroying the judicial and financial records of the magnate government and setting up a council of the upper guilds along with a few noble families who placed their loyalty with the *popolani*.⁵ In this period, magnates were largely excluded from holding civic offices.

An important source for studying the priorities of the Bolognese government is the city's statutes. Beginning in 1237, a group of officials were charged with compiling the statutes produced by Bologna's governing council, though the records of deliberations before 1245 do not survive.⁶ From 1250, the extant statutes are relatively plentiful in comparison to other similar towns – the city compiled statutes in 1255, 1259, 1262, 1264, and 1267.⁷ The era between 1267 and the next extant statutes – compiled in 1288 – was marked by turmoil and no statutes survive from that time, if they were ever recorded. After

⁵ Albano Sorbelli, *I Bentivoglio: Signori di Bologna* (Bologna: Capelli Editrice, 1969), 8; Daniel Waley, *The Italian City-Republics*, 3rd edition (London and New York: Longman, 1988), 44; Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 56–7.

⁶ Augusto Vasina, *Repertorio degli statuti comunali Emiliani e Romagnoli (sec. XII–XVI)* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo, 1997), 37.

⁷ Frati, *Statuti di Bologna*. In his 1869 edition of the statutes, Luigi Frati at times presents the statutes of a single year on its own, and at other times groups multiple years together when there are few differences. In listing the donations to pious organizations, Frati registered the statutes of 1250, 1255, and 1267 on their own, while those from 1259, 1262, and 1264 are combined into one group because of the similarity of the gifts in those years.

1288, nearly half a century would pass before the resumption of the compilation of statutes.⁸

A combination of external danger and internal conflict between factions weakened the city. In the early 1270s, Venice blocked the Po River, causing famine and unrest in the cities that relied on that waterway to obtain shipments of salt and grain from the Adriatic. Bologna waged war on Venice in an unsuccessful attempt to remove the blockade.⁹ During this time, the cities under Bolognese hegemony in the Romagna began to revolt. Finally, in 1274, civil war broke out in the city itself. A doctor of the notarial arts named Rolandino Passaggeri led the Guelf faction (generally aligned to the papacy), which expelled the Lambertazzi Ghibellines (generally supporters of the Holy Roman Emperor). Though the aristocratic families that led the Geremei and Lambertazzi factions numbered only seventy-three and eighty-three families, respectively, the victorious Guelfs expelled all those who were loyal to the defeated party, numbering approximately 4,000 people out of a population of approximately 55,000.¹⁰ The newly empowered populace confiscated the property of the expelled citizens and destroyed their homes.¹¹ The Lambertazzi traveled to Modena to provide military

⁸ The 1288 statutes are edited in Gina Fasoli and Pietro Sella, eds., *Statuti di Bologna dell'anno 1288*, 2 vols. (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1939).

⁹ Fasoli and Sella, *Statuti di Bologna*, 161; Dondarini, *Bologna medievale*, 223.

¹⁰ Sarah Blanshei, *Politics and Justice in Late Medieval Bologna* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 500. For this number, which is substantially lower than the 12,000 estimate that has been used by many historians of Bologna, Blanshei cites Giuliano Milani, *L'esclusione dal comune: conflitti e bandi politici a Bologna e in altre città italiane tra XII e XIV secolo* (Rome: Viella, 2003), 261–89.

¹¹ Antonio Ivan Pini, "Guelfes et gibelins à Bologne au XIIIe siècle: l' 'autodestruction' d'une classe dirigeante," in *Les élites urbaines au Moyen Âge: XXIVe Congrès de la Société des Historiens Médiévistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur Public* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1997), 155; Fasoli and Sella, *Statuti di Bologna*, 161.

aid for their fellow Ghibellines, who had also been expelled from that town.¹²

At the same time that Bologna was engaged in wars with Venice and among its own populace, Pope Gregory X was laying the ground work for greater control over the Romagna. As part of his agreement to support Rudolf of Habsburg for the imperial throne in 1273, Gregory obtained the emperor's promise to cede control of the Romagna to the papacy. This agreement was implemented in 1278 under Pope Nicholas III.¹³ This set the stage for the eventual formation of the Papal States, which were given shape by Cardinal Egidio de Albornoz in the 1350s.¹⁴

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the government of the city alternated between native seigniorial control and the rule of papal legates, many of whom were not benign rulers. The rise in 1315 of the Bolognese banker Romeo Pepoli as the first individual to seize control of the communal government divided the city into two new factions. Romeo Pepoli sought to legitimate his influence by tying himself and his family to the university – his son Taddeo became a doctor of law – and by becoming a patron of monastic institutions in the city, particularly of the mendicant orders. Nevertheless, an opposing faction known as the Maltraversi succeeded in overthrowing Romeo in 1321.

After Romeo Pepoli's fall, Bologna came under direct rule of the papacy, ruling at that time from Avignon. In 1327, Pope John XXII appointed his nephew, Cardinal Bertrand de Pouget, to be his legate in Bologna and to act as the city's governor. Bertrand suppressed the

¹² Dondarini, *Bologna medievale*, 223.

¹³ J. K. Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy* (London: Macmillan, and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 129–30.

¹⁴ Giovanni Tabacco, *The Struggle for Power in Medieval Italy* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 317–18.

commune's governing bodies and imposed heavy taxes in order to finance campaigns to create the Papal States.¹⁵ After the Bolognese overthrew Bertrand in 1334, they revived their deliberative bodies, with the council issuing statutes in 1335.¹⁶ Soon afterward, however, the council appointed Romeo Pepoli's son, Taddeo, as *conservatore della pace e della giustizia*, giving him seigniorial power, which he maintained until his death in 1347. His two sons assumed his role after his death, but they were not as capable rulers as their father had been, and they decided in 1350 to sell control of the city and its territory to the Archbishop Giovanni Visconti of Milan's ruling family. Visconti's vicar, Giovanni da Oleggio, returned the city to papal control, and was followed by a series of papal legates.¹⁷ The Senate continued to have a role in the city's government, compiling statutes in 1352 and 1357.¹⁸

The communal government had a resurgence in the last quarter of the century after a revolt against papal rule in 1376. An increase in civic pride marked this period, a sentiment symbolized by the substitution of a fifth-century bishop, Petronius, as Bologna's patron saint in lieu of its former patron saint, the Apostle Peter, who was too closely tied to the papacy. As a symbol of the city's new independent spirit, it commissioned the building of a new basilica in the Piazza Comunale dedicated to its new patron, with the plan of making it larger than Saint Peter's basilica in Rome, and certainly of replacing the cathedral in Bologna as the center of worship in the city. After a lapse of nearly twenty years, the revived republic issued statutes in

¹⁵ For more on Bertrand, see Lisetta Ciaccio, *Il Cardinal Legato Bertrando del Poggetto in Bologna (1327–1334)* (Bologna: Ditta Nicola Zanichelli, 1905).

¹⁶ Anna Laura Trombetti Budriesi, ed., *Lo statuto del Comune di Bologna dell'anno 1335* (Rome: Istituto Palazzo Borromini, 2008).

¹⁷ Dondarini, *Bologna medievale*, 257.

¹⁸ Valeria Braidì, *Gli Statuti del comune di Bologna degli anni 1352, 1357, 1376, 1389 (Libri I–III)*, 2 vols. (Bologna: Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Province di Romagna, 2002).

1376 and 1389.¹⁹ As the republican government faltered and a new seigniorial government emerged, attention and funds were diverted from San Petronio, leaving the façade and the transept unfinished.

The statutes thus represent diverse phases in the government, fortunes, and priorities of the city of Bologna. They span an era from the height of the thirteenth-century *popolo* government, to the era of factional turmoil in the late thirteenth century, to the emergence from direct papal rule in 1335, to the *signoria* of the mid fourteenth century and the immediate wake of the plague, to the republican revival of the late fourteenth century. In the fourteenth century, the city was intermittently under the rule of foreign powers, including periods of papal government and a brief reign by the Visconti of Milan.

The second communal government of Bologna endured for a little over two decades, but began to disintegrate in the last years of the fourteenth century. As time passed, a few patrician families would come to dominate the city government. Among these were the Zembecarri, the Gozzadini (one of the leading families in the Maltraversi), and the Bentivoglio.²⁰ In 1398, members of these three families fought a three-year war for the dominion of the city. Giovanni Bentivoglio's roots in the *popolani* gave him an edge that proved decisive.²¹ The *anziani* declared him *gonfaloniere di giustizia* for life, though his reign only lasted for fifteen months. In June 1402, the Milanese Duke Giangaleazzo Visconti defeated Bologna and added its territory to his conquests on the Italian peninsula. Giovanni died in the battle, and was buried in the church of the Augustinian Hermits of San Giacomo Maggiore, near his family home on the Via San

¹⁹ Braidi, *Statuti del comune*.

²⁰ Cecilia Ady, *The Bentivoglio of Bologna: A Study in Despotism* (1937; Oxford University Press, 1969), 7–8.

²¹ Sorbelli, *I Bentivoglio*, 15–16.

Donato.²² Milanese control over Bologna would be short-lived as well – Giangaleazzo died in 1403, and his widow returned Bologna to direct papal rule.²³ Giovanni Bentivoglio's son Antongaleazzo continued to carry political influence, especially as an advisor to Pope John XXIII. After John's deposition, Antongaleazzo came into conflict with Pope Martin V and remained in exile for many years, taking refuge in Florence with Medici allies.

On his return to Bologna in 1435, he was attacked and beheaded by agents of the pope, and he was buried with his father at San Giacomo Maggiore, the church of the Augustinian Hermits that was near the family home on the Via San Donato.²⁴ Furor over his assassination helped Antongaleazzo's son Annibale to gain power for the family, which with the exception of the three years after Annibale's assassination in 1445 stayed in the hands of his successors until Pope Julius II regained dominion over Bologna in 1506.²⁵

The governing body of Bologna demonstrates a consistent concern to promote the welfare of religious organizations in the city, including houses of professed men or women, hospitals for the poor and infirm, and, on occasion, pious men or women living in private homes or small communities. The mid thirteenth-century statutes reflect the flowering of monasticism and of new religious communities. In this era, the *anziani* seem to have been particularly interested in providing help to communities of religious women – thirty-six nunneries received aid, along with three mixed houses whose inhabitants were primarily women. The thirteenth century was, in particular, a time for growth in the number of nunneries in Bologna. While there were only eight nunneries in the city in

²² Ady, *The Bentivoglio of Bologna*, 9–10.

²³ Fasoli and Sella, *Statuti di Bologna*, 184.

²⁴ Ady, *The Bentivoglio of Bologna*, 14–15.

²⁵ Ady, *The Bentivoglio of Bologna*, 19–28; Fasoli and Sella, *Statuti di Bologna*, 131.

1230, by 1288 there were at least thirty-two convents in Bologna and the surrounding district. In other words, at least twenty-four new houses of religious women were established in the space of less than sixty years. In this period, the city was more likely to pass over communities of male religious, especially those that were well established. When the city did provide alms to monks, canons, and friars, it was to aid large building projects (particularly for the Franciscan and Augustinian friars, though the Dominicans did not receive any aid from the city in this period) or to support struggling houses.

DONATIONS TO RELIGIOUS WOMEN IN THE MID THIRTEENTH CENTURY

In the mid thirteenth century, the prominent position in the statutes of the city's donations to pious organizations indicates its importance. From 1250 to 1267, the city council placed the promise to donate grain and money to pious institutions near the beginning of the statutes, in the section that contains the podesta's oath. It is located under the first rubric of the first book of the statutes. Immediately following a section in which the podesta promises to oversee the maintenance of the towers, gates, and moats of the city, to improve these structures where necessary, and to keep the waterways free of occlusions and to restore destroyed mills and locks, he agrees to distribute money and grain to houses of religious men and women, including monastic houses, hospitals, and small groups of lay men or women living in private homes.²⁶ After an extensive list of donations, the text returns to the matter of city infrastructure, continuing to focus on

²⁶ Frati, *Statuti di Bologna*, 38–40.

the necessity of keeping up the city's physical resources, such as bridges, waterways, and the gates of the city's walls (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2).²⁷

The city council in the mid thirteenth century focused their charity on recently founded institutions, which under the circumstances included the vast majority of nunneries. Of the total number of convents in mid thirteenth-century Bologna, only five did not receive any aid from the commune. One characteristic that all five of these convents share is that they were independent Benedictine houses. Four of these were well-established Benedictine convents that dated back at least as far as the early twelfth century, placing their foundation in the era of aristocratic rule.²⁸ The fifth omitted nunnery complicates the picture. San Nicolò di Carpineta was founded in 1238 – more recently than many nunneries that did receive aid from the city's treasury. The fact that this relatively new Benedictine nunnery was passed over in the distribution of alms may suggest that the city preferred some orders over others, and specifically that the Benedictines were out of favor. Perhaps this helps to explain the fact that the nuns of San Nicolò decided to convert to the Augustinian Rule sometime in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, though they returned to the Benedictine Rule to unite with the Cistercian nunnery of San Guglielmo after their convent was destroyed in a flood in 1322.

In addition to a preference for new religious orders and Augustinian houses, there are two potential reasons for the commune's

²⁷ Frati, *Statuti di Bologna*, 53–4.

²⁸ These nunneries are S. Colombano, S. Margherita, SS. Gervasio e Protasio, and SS. Vitale e Agricola. The earliest record of each of these nunneries is a bull from Pope Pascal II that lists nunneries under the jurisdiction of the bishop. See Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 177, 183, 190, and 218.

Table 4.1 *Donations to religious women in the statutes of Bologna, 1250–67*²⁹

Community	Order	1250	1255	1259	1262	1264	1267
S. Agnese	Dom.			100 L			
S. Andrea di Pontemaggiore	Aug.			50 c; 25 L	50 c; 25 L	50 c; 25 L	50 c
S. Cristina della Fondazza	Cam.	25 c	25 c	50 c; 60 L	50 c; 60 L	50 c; 60 L	50 c
S. Eusebio (S. Salvatore)	Cam.			10 c; 10 L	10 c; 10 L	10 c; 10 L	10 c; 10 L
S. Francesco	Clar.	50 c	50 c	100 c; 200 L	100 c; 200 L	100 c; 200 L	100 c; 50 L
S. Giacomo de Laureto	?			10 c; 10 L			
S. Giovanni Battista	Aug./Dom.	40 c	60 c	100 c; 250 L	100 c; 250 L	100 c; 250 L	100 c
S. Guglielmo	Ben./Cist.			150 c; 100 L			100 c
S. Maria “di finibus terre”	?			10 c; 10 L	10 c; 10 L	10 c; 10 L	
S. Maria “nuper edificata”	?			40 c			
S. Maria del Cestello	Cist.	25 c	25 c	100 L			60 c; 20 L
S. Maria del Monte della Guardia	Aug./Dom.	25 c	25 c	50 c			
S. Maria della Misericordia	Cist.	25 c	60 c	60 c; 150 L	60 c; 150 L	60 c; 150 L	50 c
S. Maria della Volta	Aug.			60 c; 50 L			50 c
S. Maria delle Pugliole	S. Marc.	25 c	50 c	100 c; 100 L	100 c; 100 L	100 c; 100 L	100 c; 100 L
S. Maria di Biliemme	Cam.	25 c	50 c	60 c; 25 L	60 c; 100 L	60 c; 25 L	25 c
S. Maria di Castagnolo	Ben.			15 c; 25 L			30 c
S. Maria di Nazareth della Vezza	Aug.			20 c; 25 L			20 c; 15 L
S. Maria di Rocanovella	?			50 c	50 c	50 c	

S. Maria di Valverde	S. Marc.			20 c; 10 L			
S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite	Aug.	100 c	100 c	200 c; 100 L			
S. Maria Maddalena di Valdipietra	S. Marc./Aug.				100 c	100 c	100 c
S. Maria Nuova	Aug.	20 c	40 c	100 c; 50 L	100 c; 50 L	100 c; 50 L	50 c
S. Mattia	Aug./Dom.			50 c; 60 L			50 c
S. Nicolò della Casa di Dio	Cam.	50 c	50 c	50 c	50 c	50 c	50 c
S. Pietro Martire	Dom.		25 c	45 c; 100 L			45 c; 25 L
S. Caterina di Quarto	S. Cat./Aug.	100 c	100 c	100 c	100 c	100 c	50 c
SS. Trinità di Ronzano	S. Marc.	50 c	50 c	100 c			
Umiliati di S. Lucia	Hum.		20 c	20 c; 20 L			
S. Agostino	Aug.	25 c	25 c	40 c; 100 L	40 c; 100 L	40 c; 100 L	50 c
S. Lorenzo	Aug.			30 c; 25 L	100 c 100 L	100 c; 100 L	100 c
S. Maria delle Vergini	Aug.		25 c	40			50 c

c = *corbe* of grain; L = lire

²⁹ Frati, *Statuti di Bologna*, 40–52.

Table 4.2 *Donations to religious men in the statutes of Bologna, 1250–67*³⁰

Community	Order	1250	1255	1259	1262	1264	1267
Friars of the Sack	Sack Friars			50 c; 100 L	50 c; 100 L.	50 c; 100 L	50 c; 60 L
Friars of Martorano	?		20 c	20 c; 25 L			
S. Antonio “de curia galliera”	?			10 c			
S. Francesco	Fran.	25 L	25 L	25 L (needs); 300 L (building); 100 L (feasts)	25 L (needs); 300 L (building); 100 L (feasts)	25 L (needs); 300 L (building); 100 L (feasts)	25 L
S. Giacomo di Savena	Aug. Hermits	25 c	25 c	50 c; 300 L	50 c; 300 L	50 c; 300 L	50 c; 100 L
S. Giacomo di Strada S. Donato	Aug. Hermits			300 L			
S. Giacomo Filipi di Casa di Dio	Hum.				25 c	25 c	
S. Gregorio di Strada S. Vitale	Aug.			25 c; 25 L	40 c; 25 L	40 c; 25 L	50 c
S. Liberata	?			10 c			
S. Margarita di Barbiano	Serv.			40 c; 60 L			40 c
S. Maria Maddalena	Ben.?	25 c	25 c				
S. Michele in Bosco	Aug.	25 c	25 c	25 c	25 c	25 c	

³⁰ Frati, *Statuti di Bologna*, 40–52.

neglect of these houses – their origins in the era of magnate government and perhaps even earlier suggest association with the families of the landed aristocracy that were out of power in this period, so it is possible that the *anziani* decided to concentrate their largesse on newer nunneries in which their own daughters had been professed. Another possibility, not incompatible with the aristocratic associations of these nunneries, might be that the city preferred to give to religious houses that were in need rather than to those with strong economic standing.

Though some newer communities, such as Diana d'Andalò's Sant'Agnese, had the patronage of wealthy families, other monastic houses struggled to find resources that would allow them to complete their monasteries and churches. For poorer convents, city donations of alms in money and in grain could help the community survive. Sant'Agnese itself did not receive any alms from the city in the 1250 or 1255 statutes, though the city did donate substantial sums in the late 1250s and early 1260s, just after the convent had moved from its first home in the suburbs to a monastery within the city walls and was building its church. In this case, a wealthy monastic house did not receive money except during a period of time when it was engaged in a building campaign.

For those nunneries to which the city did provide support, the preferred gift was grain, especially from 1250 to 1255. During these years, donations ranged from 20 to 100 *corbe* of grain. The *corba* contained roughly 79 liters of grain, or about 17 gallons.³¹ A suggestion as to its value can be gleaned from the purchase of grain in that unit in 1324, in which a nunnery bought 30 *corbe* from the cathedral

³¹ Ronald Edward Zupko, *Italian Weights and Measures from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981), 100.

chapter for 25 lire, suggesting that each *corba* was worth slightly less than 1 lire at that time.³²

The population of the house may have been another factor that influenced the size of the city's donations. For example, in 1250, by far the largest disbursement went to Santa Caterina di Quarto, a double house that in 1259 held a population of sixty nuns along with thirty-three male inhabitants (eight priests and twenty-five lay brothers), compared to the more common size in the teens and twenties.³³ Santa Caterina received 100 baskets of grain, as did the Convertite house of Santa Maria Maddalena beginning in 1255.

Of the twenty-one convents to which the communal government gave money in addition to grain, eight specifically mentioned that the donation was intended to help with building. Beyond these eight nunneries, an additional five whose monetary gifts were not specifically dedicated to a building project had been founded in the last twenty years, and the nuns therefore could have used the money for ongoing construction or to offset debt from a completed dormitory or church.³⁴ The largest monetary donation (200 lire) went to the Poor Clares of San Francesco, reflecting support for the Franciscan movement that is also evident in the large gift to the friars in the city. Five other nunneries received disbursements of 100 lire, some for multiple years. Two more monetary gifts are designated for the purchase of garments, and one was given to a group of Cistercian nuns that was living temporarily in Bologna after flight from its home in Reggio Emilia.

³² ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 5/3247, no. 18. The nunnery, Santa Maria del Cestello, subsequently bought from the cathedral chapter property that generated three *corbe* of grain a year for 40 lire.

³³ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 5/4498, no. 15.

³⁴ Five nunneries that received money but for whom there is no mention of a building project were of recent foundation. The nunneries with their approximate foundation dates are as follows: San Giovanni Battista (1239); Santa Maria Nova (1250), San Mattia (1254), San Eusebio (1259), and San Guglielmo (1260).

In only four cases were the gifts made in the names of particular religious figures. The baskets of grain given to sisters at Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia were offered in reverence to the Virgin, and the donation made to the Camaldolese Santa Cristina della Fondazza was done in the name of Jesus Christ and of his mother. The large gift to the Convertites was specifically designated as pious alms in honor of Mary Magdalene. Finally, the gift to the canons of Sant'Agostino was made in honor of that saint to commemorate the victory of the Bolognese over King Enzo of Sicily, who was defeated on Saint Augustine's feast day in 1249.³⁵

COMPARISON WITH SUPPORT FOR RELIGIOUS MEN IN THE MID THIRTEENTH CENTURY

A comparison of communal gifts given to religious women in the mid thirteenth-century *popolo* era with donations of the city government to their male counterparts can provide additional insight regarding the city council's religious priorities. As was the case with houses of religious women, in the donations to communities of monks, friars, and canons in the 1250s and 1260s, the city government passed over the old and established in favor of the new and the poor. This pattern was amplified in communal donations to religious men – at least fifteen male communities received no alms from the city. For monastic men, not only did the city omit support for great Benedictine monasteries such as Santo Stefano, but even houses belonging to reformed Benedictine orders were left out. For example, whereas the *anziani* provided support to five Camaldolese nunneries, they did

³⁵ Enzo was the son of Frederick II. His capture at the Battle of Fossalta was a source of pride for the Bolognese. He remained until his death in 1272 in genteel captivity in a palazzo on the city's main piazza. See Dondarini, *Bologna medievale*, 162 and 220.

not do the same for monks of that order. Similarly, houses of Augustinian canons, including the venerable Santa Maria di Reno and San Giovanni in Monte, did not receive donations in the statutes. By contrast, some mendicant groups received prodigious support from the city. In particular, monetary donations were concentrated overwhelmingly toward the Franciscans and the Augustinian Hermits, both of which were constructing new buildings in the mid thirteenth century.³⁶ In this era, at least some within the Franciscan Order were growing comfortable with the idea of using churches as a stable base despite Francis's prohibition against the owning of property, and the city of Bologna demonstrated a willingness to subsidize substantially the building of a church for that order. The Augustinian Hermits were a new mendicant order, founded by Innocent IV in 1254 and expanded by his successor, Alexander IV, in 1256. The newly formed order quickly established communities in Bologna, and their interest in the city was clearly reciprocated.

Both the Franciscans and the Augustinian Hermits received 1,000 lire from the city, specifically designated to subsidize the building of their churches. The *anziani* agreed in 1259 to give the Franciscans this sum, and, in addition to the funds dedicated to building, in most years gave the Friars Minor 25 lire intended for their day-to-day sustenance. The donation for building was to be distributed in three installments. When the city completed its donation to the Franciscans in 1263, they turned their attention to the Augustinian Hermits, supporting the building of their new church with 1,000 lire

³⁶ The Augustinian Hermits were a newly created order at this time, founded when Pope Innocent IV united several congregations of Augustinians in 1254 to form the Tuscan Hermits of Saint Augustine. His successor, Alexander IV, expanded the order in 1256. A. C. Shannon, "Augustinians," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1967), 1: 1072; Philip E. McWilliams, "Augustinian Friars/Hermits," in *The Encyclopedia of Monasticism* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000), 103–4.

over the course of three years. Other smaller and marginal mendicant groups were recipients of communal disbursements. This included the Friars of the Sack, an order suppressed by the Second Council of Lyons in 1274.³⁷

Donations to these houses contrasted with the lack of support for Dominican friars, a mendicant order with an important center in Bologna that even housed the founder's remains. However, the omission of support for the Dominicans may seem less surprising in light of the fact that they were well established at the church of San Nicolò della Vigne from the 1220s, and therefore it is possible that the *anziani* did not consider them to be in particular need – resources could instead be used to ensure that the Franciscans and Augustinian Hermits had suitable homes in the city. Another possible explanation for the omission of Dominican friars from civic alms is that San Domenico had served as a headquarters for inquests against heresy since 1233. One manifestation of the estrangement between the Friar Preachers and the city is the fact that other mendicant churches were the sites of confraternity meetings, though no lay piety groups met at San Domenico.³⁸

Beyond gifts to religious men and women based in Bologna, the statutes also reflect a concern with supporting the sick, the poor, and refugees. Six hospitals received alms from the city, as did three religious communities that were living in Bologna while exiled from their home city. The nuns of Santa Cristina from Treviso received fifteen baskets of grain to help support them while they lived in the house of Uberto Armani in 1255. In 1262 and 1264, in addition to the grain, the *anziani* also gave them 15 lire to help with rent they paid for their housing. Similarly, a group of Cistercian nuns from Parma

³⁷ Frances Andrews, *The Other Friars: Carmelite, Augustinian, Sack and Pied Friars in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2006), 175–223.

³⁸ Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities*, 7.

took refuge in the city, living in the Borgo Sant'Isaia in 1255 and then staying at Santa Maria di Rocanovella from 1262 to 1264. A group described only as the "Friars of Martorano" also stayed in churches in Bologna and received support for the time that they remained in the city.

Along with giving a picture of the movement of refugee monastic houses, a study of the statutes also permits us to see the churning of the monastic community in Bologna – some religious houses appear in the statutes for one or two years, then disappear. In some cases, the record of a communal gift may be the only trace left of a pious group. This also demonstrates the thorough knowledge that members of the *anziani* had regarding the religious groups that established themselves on a permanent or temporary basis in the city, and the circumstances of these communities.

As they did with aid to nunneries, in the mid thirteenth century the *anziani* appear to have preferred to give alms to communities of religious men that were less firmly established and therefore perhaps more in need of support. Concentration of donations to mendicant and marginal groups remains a clear trend in the statutes from 1250 to 1267, with a shift toward support of all mendicant groups in the later thirteenth century as they became fixtures within each quarter of the city.

CHANGES IN THE LATE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

A key difference between the mid thirteenth century statutes and those from 1288 is the placement of the donations. The period between the last statutes in 1267 and the resumption of their compilation in 1288 saw a period of warfare between the Geremei and the Lambertazzi, resulting in the expulsion and re-admission of the defeated Lambertazzi party. Beginning in 1288, donations to

religious groups were no longer featured as prominently – they were not part of the oath of the leading officials – but the city fathers still included gifts of grain or money to forty pious institutions.

One significant development is the increased importance of mendicant houses, with one community located in each of the city's four quarters. The Dominicans's exclusion from communal largesse, at least as reflected in statutes, would end by 1288. A major change in donation patterns to houses of religious men occurred in that year. By that time, the mendicant churches were becoming the focal points for religious life in each quarter of the city,³⁹ and a special category of giving emerged. While several groups of friars were among the forty institutions that received donations of money or grain (with half of the donation to the Friar Preachers disbursed at Christmas time and half on the Calends of May), they also received additional monetary gifts on important feast days associated with each main mendicant house. The chief convents for the three primary mendicant communities in the city – the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinian Hermits, each took in a donation of 100 lire, delivered to the door of their church on the feasts, respectively, of Francis, Dominic, and James the Apostle – the saint for whom the main church of Augustinian Hermits was named. Reflecting some support from the city but perhaps a lower status, the *anziani* donated only 25 lire to the Servites, whose church served as the religious center of the eastern quarter of the city.⁴⁰ This pattern of giving substantial sums to the main mendicant church in each quarter of the city persisted through the fourteenth century (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4).

Where donations to religious women are concerned, the donations in 1288 became less generous and less evenly distributed. The nine donations to communities of religious women were all monetary

³⁹ Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities*, 6–7.

⁴⁰ Fasoli and Sella, *Statuti di Bologna*, 193.

Table 4.3 *Donations to religious women in the statutes of Bologna, 1288–1389*⁴¹

Community	Order	1288	1335	1352/57	1376/89
Conventus dominarum de Poçale	?		5 c	5 c	
Conventus dominarum de Santuciis	Sant.		6 c	6 c	5 L
Filiae domini Thome de Canto	?		36 c		
S. Agostino “extra circlam strate Maioris”	Aug.	40 c			
S. Andrea di Pontemaggiore	Aug.	25 c	12 c	12 c	
S. Anna	Cam.	25 c	10 c	10 c	
S. Augustine di Fossa Cavallina	Aug.		25 L	25 L	
S. Cristina della Fondazza	Cam.	50 c			
S. Croce “prope campus mercati”	Ben.	25 c	15 c	15 c	
S. Eusebio (S. Salvatore)	Cam.	50 c; 10 L	15 c	15 c	
S. Francesco	Clar.	100 c; 50 L			
SS. Gervasio e Protasio	Ben.				5 L
S. Giovanni Battista	Aug./Dom.	100 c			
S. Guglielmo	Ben./Cist.	100 c	15 c	15 c	15 L
S. Lodovico (& Alessio)	Clar.				15 L
S. Lorenzo in Strada Castiglione	Aug.	100 c		10 c	10 L
S. Maria de Egipto	Fran. terz?		15 c	15 c	5 L
S. Maria del Cestello	Cist.	60 c; 20 L	10 c	10 c	5 L
S. Maria del Monte della Guardia	Aug./Dom.		10 c	15 c	
S. Maria della Misericordia	Cist.	50 c; 50 L			
S. Maria della Volta	Aug.	50 c			

S. Maria delle Pugliole	S. Marco/Aug.	100 c	12 c	12 c	5 L
S. Maria delle Vergini	Aug.	70 c; 25 L	20 c	20 c	5 L
S. Maria di Biliemme	Cam.	25 c			
S. Maria di Castagnolo	Ben.	30 c			
S. Maria di Croce	?	10 c			
S. Maria di Nazareth della Vezza	Aug.	20 c; 15 L			
S. Maria di Valverde	S. Marco/Aug.	40 c	12 c	12 c	
S. Maria “extra circlam Sancte Katerine”	?	50 c			
S. Maria Maddalena delle Convertite	Aug./Dom.	100 c; 50 L	12 c	12 c	5 L
S. Maria Maddalena di Valdi Pietra	Dom.	100 c; 50 L			
S. Maria Maddalena in Curia Argelato	?	40 c			
S. Maria Nuova	Dom.	50 c	10 c	10 c	10 L
S. Mattia	Aug./Dom.		15 c	15 c	10 L
S. Pietro Martire	Aug./Dom.	100 c; 25 L	10 c	10 c	5 L
S. Caterina di Quarto	Aug./Dom.	50 c	12 c	12 c	

⁴¹ Fasoli and Sella, *Statuti di Bologna*, 191–4; Budriesi, *Lo statuto del comune di Bologna*, 379–84; Braidi, *Statuti del comune*, 283–8; 1116–20.

Table 4.4 *Donations to religious men in the statutes of Bologna, 1288–1389*⁴²

Community	Order	1288	1335	1352/57	1376/89
Frati Pauperes verecundi	?		35 L	35 L	
S. Giacomo Filipi di Casa di Dio	Hum.	10 c			
S. Ambrogio	Aug.		10 L	10 L	
S. Giovanni in Monte	Aug.		12 L	12 L	
S. Gregorio di Strada S. Vitale	Aug.	40 c	50 L	50 L	25 L
S. Pietro (cathedral canons)	Aug.		25 L	25 L	
Frati Heremitani “extra circhullam borgi Sancti Mame”	Aug. Hermits		50 L	50 L	15 L
S. Giacomo di Carpineta	Aug. Hermits	20 c			
S. Giacomo di Savena	Aug. Hermits		50 L	50 L	
S. Giacomo di Strada S. Donato	Aug. Hermits	50 c; 200 L	125 L	120 L	70 L
S. Procolo	Ben.		10 L	10 L	
S. Stefano	Ben.		24 L	24 L	10 L
S. Maria degli Angeli	Cam.				10 L
S. Martino di Aposa	Carm.	50 c; 50 L	125 L	120 L	25 L
S. Pietro Celestini	Cel.				10 L
S. Domenico	Dom.	50 c; 100 L	200 L	200 L	70 L
S. Francesco	Fran.	50 c; 100 L	200 L	200 L	70 L
S. Margarita di Barbiano	Serv.	50 c			
S. Maria degli Servi	Serv.	50 c; 50 L	25 L	50 L	40 L
Frati Apostoli di Borgo Lama		26 c; 25 L			
SS. Pietro e Marcellino	S. Marco		5 L	5 L	

⁴² Fasoli and Sella, *Statuti di Bologna*, 191–4; Budriesi, *Lo statuto del comune di Bologna*, 379–84; Braidi, *Statuti del comune*, 283–8; 1116–20.

gifts ranging from 10 to 50 lire. Benedictine houses were still not represented among the favored convents, though otherwise a pattern is difficult to discern. Among the nine houses that received donations are Augustinian, Camaldolese, Cistercian, Clarissan, Convertite, and Dominican convents, though some of the more well-established Dominican houses (such as Sant'Agnese) do not appear on the list.⁴³

COMPARISON WITH OTHER CITIES

Though available statutes for other city-states are relatively sparse in the thirteenth century, a comparison with the decrees of other cities is useful for gauging the extent to which Bologna's donations are representative of the civic priorities of its neighbors. Some cities did not include any alms for pious organizations in their statutes, though it is likely that they provided support to monastic houses and hospitals through other means. Two cities that do include donations to pious organizations in their city statutes are Padua and Ravenna.

One important similarity between Padua and Bologna is the implication that a guiding principle in the distribution of alms is a sense of need for building purposes. Though there are far fewer individual donations in Padua than there are in Bologna, in almost every case the Paduan podesta making the gift specifies the purpose of the donation, usually aimed at helping the community expand their building or repair an existing structure.

From 1270 to 1275, three podestas in Padua pledged to provide donations from the city treasury to religious organizations, though the recipients of these gifts changed with each individual official. For example, Tomasino Iustiniano provided 75 *libras denariorum venetorum* to the administrator of the Domus Dei for the care of the

⁴³ Fasoli and Sella, *Statuti di Bologna*, 191–2.

poor and the sick. In 1275, Lorenzo Tiepolo (who would become doge of Venice in the 1280s) set a precedent of providing 100 *lib. den. ven.* each to the Friars Minor and Friars Preachers on the octave of All Saints Day, as well as 50 lire to the Franciscans fifteen days before the feast of Saint Anthony. The Augustinian Hermits would receive 100 lire, though the date of the donation is not specified.

Under the regime of Roberto Roberti, the city articulated in the statutes a more elaborate system of donations, mostly directed toward communities of religious women in need of aid for completing new building projects or rebuilding deteriorating structures. In October 1275, Roberto provided an unspecified amount to the convent of Santa Maria della Misericordia for the repair of their dormitory and portico, "that the sisters should be able to remain in that monastery, to the honor of God and of the city of Padua."⁴⁴ The Council of Six Hundred, under his government, specified donations to other monastic houses, with the expectation that future podestas would continue to implement this practice. In February 1276, the council decided to give donations of 200 *lib. den. ven.* to four convents and of 300 *lib. den. ven.* to a fifth, in each case for the purpose of building dormitories, refectories, or infirmaries, or for repair of the monastery. At the beginning of the list of donations, the council emphasized that they agreed "that for the love of God, in contemplation of piety and mercy that the same city and district of Padua might maintain and keep itself unharmed."⁴⁵

The donations of Ravenna's council to its monastic houses are more difficult to date because the codex in which the statutes are

⁴⁴ "ut sorores in illo monasterio permanere valeant ad honorem dei et padue civitatis." *Statuti del comune di Padova dal secolo xii all'anno 1285*, ed. Andrea Gloria (Padua: Tipografia F. Sacchetto, 1873), 351.

⁴⁵ "quod amore dei intuitu pietatis et misericordie ut ipse civitatem padue et districtum manuteneat et deffendet illesam." *Statuti del comune di Padova*, 352.

preserved represents a later compilation of statutes ranging from the late twelfth century through around 1260.⁴⁶ In the section of the statutes that deals with donations to religious establishments, the city provided for amounts between 3 and 20 lire to be given to several houses, and then in two subsequent modifications increased the annual amounts to some of the houses and added another community to the list of houses that would receive donations from the city.

As was the case with Padua, Ravenna's statutes explicitly linked the welfare of the city's religious houses and the fate of the city. The section begins,

We establish and order, to the honor of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, that the lord God might increase and preserve the commune of the city of Ravenna in a good and peaceful state, that the *locus* of the friars minor of Ravenna and the friars themselves ought to have twenty lire of Ravenna from the city of Ravenna for their garments or their other needs in every year on the feast of Saint Michael.⁴⁷

This initial list of annual donations mentions seven religious establishments that received monetary gifts from the commune. This list of communities includes five houses of religious men – two specified by order (Franciscans and Vallumbrosans), while the remaining houses were probably independent Benedictine or Augustinian houses. Two of the establishments were houses of religious women – one was the Dominican convent of Santa Maria in Venetica and the

⁴⁶ Andrea Zoli and Silvio Bernicoli, eds., *Statuto del secolo XIII del commune di Ravenna* (Ravenna: Premiata Tipo-Litografia Ravegnana, 1904), x–xi. The authors cite the opinion of a previous editor of the statutes, Antonio Tarlazzi, that the bulk of the statutes are from a 1213 meeting of the comune's representatives, though they note that it is likely that many statutes in the codex predate and postdate this meeting.

⁴⁷ "Statuimus et ordinamus ad honorem dei, beate marie virginis et omnium sanctorum, ut deus dominis comune civitatis ravenne in bono et pacifice statu augeat et conservat, quod locus fratrum minorum de ravenna et ipsi fratres habere debeant a comuni ravenne pro indumentis seu aliis necessitatibus [sic] suis quolibet anno in festo sancti michaelis virginis libras ravignorum." Zoli and Bernicoli, *Statuti di Ravenna*, 168.

other the *locus domine Marie*, a community that had its origins in the tenth century and that was affiliated with the Order of Preachers by the late thirteenth century.⁴⁸ In addition to the annual payment given to the *locus domine Marie*, the city encouraged those who had obtained goods through theft, usury, or other unjust means to make restitution of their ill-gotten gains to the community of religious women at the *locus domine Marie*.⁴⁹ Demonstrating that the council intended these donations to be carried out annually and continued by each podesta, the text of the initial set of donations concludes, “and if the podesta does not carry this out, let the podesta lose just as much, and let the commune be reimbursed from his fees.”⁵⁰

In later years, the commune increased the payments to some of these religious houses, raising the amount of the annual donation to the Friars Minor, for example, from 20 to 30 lire. Probably because of the demise of the monastery, the commune of Ravenna ceased payments to Santa Maria in Venetica, giving a slightly larger amount instead to the Augustinian canonesses of Santo Stephano degli Ulivi, and adding annual payments to Santa Maria de Domo Ferrato. As was the case in Bologna, these statutes omitted donations to venerable Benedictine houses. For example, the monks of Sant’Apollinare in Classe and the nuns of Sant’Andrea Maggiore were not listed among the monastic communities to which the city promised annual payments. This omission raises the possibility that the commune of Ravenna, like that of Bologna, wanted to put their financial support behind new or struggling religious houses.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Claudia Baldini, *Monasteri femminili degli ordini religiosi mendicanti in Ravenna: cronologia dal secolo XIII ai nostri giorni* (Ravenna: Tipolito Stear, 2006), 33.

⁴⁹ Zoli and Bernicoli, *Statuti di Ravenna*, 167.

⁵⁰ “Et si potestas non observaret, perdat ipse potestas tantumdem, et solvat comuni de suo feudo.” Zoli and Bernicoli, *Statuti di Ravenna*, 168.

⁵¹ Baldini, *Monasteri femminili*, 36.

Cities varied in the extent to which they saw donations to religious organizations as civic duties worthy of being codified into statute. Padua and Ravenna provide two other cases in which the city council makes provision of support to certain religious houses part of the duty of the podesta. Ravenna's leaders do not specify the rationale for choosing some religious houses for communal support. For Padua, however, in nearly every case, the Council of Six Hundred articulates in the statutes a specific need that the donation is intended to address, whether this is the repair of deteriorating dormitories or the building of an infirmary. There may, of course, be other rationales behind the choice of these convents, such as family ties to council members. All but one of these communities is identifiably a house of religious women. Though this is initiated under the administration of Roberto Roberti in 1275, the statute indicates the council's expectation that successors will continue to fulfill the duty to support these monastic communities. Similarly, Ravenna's statutes state that a podesta who does not provide donations to the named communities will be in dereliction of his duty. For these communes, the duties of the podesta include keeping order in the city through enforcing the laws, maintaining city infrastructure such as bridges and canals, and supporting the growth and preservation of religious houses.⁵²

⁵² The city of Strasbourg provides a comparative example of a city outside of Italy taking substantial responsibility for the well-being of religious women. In addition to providing considerable financial support for the building of new convents when the path of a new city wall led to the demolition of their original houses, the city magistrate appointed officials who were to oversee the daily life, including expenditures and management of goods, in the city's convents. Sabine Klapp, "Frauenstifte in Städten am südlichen Oberrhein: Das Beispiel St. Stephan in Straßburg im späten Mittelalter," in *Kloster und Stadt am südlichen Oberrhein im späten Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Heinz Krieg (Schopfheim: Geschichtsverein Markgräflerland, 2011), 80; Schmitt, "Geistliche Frauen," 69–70.

SUPPRESSIONS

Just as some governing regimes could see the support of pious organizations as an important part of the administration of the city, others could see these communities as sources of wealth that could be redirected to favored projects. Beginning with the governorship of Cardinal Bertrand de Pouget, the property of nunneries became a source of funding for papal goals to create collegiate churches. It is likely that for Bertrand, founding these communities of clerics was part of a strategy aiming to establish an Italian base of operations for his uncle, Pope John XXII. Whatever the reason for his desire to build up the clerical infrastructure of the city, Bertrand suppressed seven convents and diverted their property toward these four churches, located in the four quarters of the city. After the cardinal's expulsion and the restoration of most of these convents, subsequent papal governors in the mid fourteenth century would reinforce the suppressions. By the end of the fourteenth century, only one of these seven communities remained.

It is significant that the suppression of nunneries seems to have occurred primarily in eras in which clerical officials had both political and religious authority. Though it was certainly possible for a prelate to decree the suppression of a nunnery without also holding political power, in practice bishops or cardinals did not seem to initiate these actions in eras of republican or local seigniorial rule. Local governing officials could come to the aid of convents. Notably, after the cardinal's expulsion, the city council served as the authority allowing the restoration of these communities. Perhaps aware that they could not expect support from the bishop, cardinal, or pope, at least five of the suppressed convents appealed to the city council for permission to reconstitute their communities in 1334, and were allowed to do so. In later decades when cardinals again served

as governors, they repeated Bertrand's actions, leaving only Santi Gervasio e Protasio intact as a community of nuns.

PAPAL GOVERNMENT IN BOLOGNA

The end of the thirteenth century marked a period of instability in Bologna. As in other areas of central and northern Italy, the factional strife between the pro-papal Guelf and pro-imperial Ghibelline parties led to intra-city warfare in Bologna. The battle came to a head in the 1270s, when the Guelfs in the Geremei party defeated the Ghibelline Lambertazzi party, leading to their expulsion in 1274. Between this year and 1306, the city experienced a cycle of expulsion and return of the aristocratic Lambertazzi and many of their supporters among the sottoposti.⁵³ The conflict among factions in the city led to the demise of the republican government, initiating a period after 1274 in which the papacy exerted authority over Bologna. Though it was by no means the only factor, the demographic upheaval of this period may have contributed to the dearth of new foundations in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. While approximately twenty convents were established between 1250 and 1290, no new communities of religious women were founded in the last decade of the thirteenth century, and only four were founded in the entire first half of the fourteenth century.⁵⁴

In 1332, Cardinal Bertrand de Pouget disbanded several nunneries in order to finance the creation of four collegiate churches, one for each quarter of the city. These churches were San Colombano, San Giacomo de' Carbonesi, San Sigismondo, and San Michele dei

⁵³ Gina Fasoli, "Bologna nell'età medievale (1115–1506)," in *Storia di Bologna*, ed. Antonio Ferri and Giancarlo Roversi (Bologna: Edizioni ALFA, 1978), 161–3; Dondarini, *Bologna medievale*, 223–37.

⁵⁴ One existing double monastery, Santa Caterina, moved into the city walls from its original location in Quarto Superiore in 1291.

Leprosetti, all of which were existing parish churches. Chroniclers and recent historians have given varying counts for the number of nunneries suppressed. The decree that disbanded the nunneries mentions only four by name but also says that some other nunneries of the Augustinian, Benedictine, and Camaldolese Orders were to be disbanded.⁵⁵ It is certain that Bertrand disbanded at least six nunneries: Sant'Agostino, San Colombano, Santi Gervasio e Protasio, Santa Maria di Ravone, San Nicolò della Casa di Dio, and San Salvatore.⁵⁶ Gabriella Zarri lists the Benedictine nunnery of Santa Croce di Borgo Galliera as the seventh suppressed house, finding it to be among the properties unified with San Michele dei Leprosetti in the *Elenco nonantolano* of 1366 and in an *estimo* in 1378.⁵⁷ Though the appearance of Santa Croce in a much later list of San Michele's assets would not demonstrate in a definitive way that San Croce was among Cardinal Bertrand's suppressed nunneries, details from a donation of alms from the city to Santa Croce in 1335 support Zarri's assessment. The *anziani* order the delivery of fifteen *corbe* of grain to Santa Croce, qualifying this order with the phrase "si per se conventum [sic] habere reperiantur." This language is similar to the phrase used to qualify donations to San Salvatore and

⁵⁵ "Nuper auctoritate apostolica nobis in hac parte commissa, abbatissas, moniales & familiares personas locorum sancti Columbani, sanctorum Gervasii & Protasii, & sancti Salvatoris de Ravone, & Domus-Dei, olim monasteriorum Bononienses sancti Benedicti, & eiusdem, sancti Augustini & Camaldulensis ordinum ad certa alia monasteria monialium eorumdem ordinum in civitate Bononia constituta duximus transferendas; ac predictum olim monasterium sancti Columbani & Michaelis de Lebroxeto, sancti Jacobi de Carbon. & sancti Sigismundi Bononienses tunc parochiales ecclesias, tam predicta auctoritate apostolica, quam illa, qua fundimus, in collegiatis ecclesias ereximus seculares novem canonicorum capitulum facientium." G.-B. Mittarelli and Anslemo Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses Ordinis Sancti Benedicti* (Farnborough, Hants.: Gregg, 1970 [1760]), 5: app. col. 505–6. Some of the nunneries mentioned in this decree are referred to by alternative names in chronicles and in secondary literature. I shall follow the usage of these later works. San Salvatore di Ravone is more commonly known as Santa Maria di Ravone – using this name diminishes confusion, since there is also another San Salvatore among the suppressed houses; Domus-Dei is San Nicolò della Casa di Dio.

⁵⁶ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 167 n. 9.

⁵⁷ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 178 n. 61.

Sant'Agustino di Fossa Cavallina, convents that were certainly among Bertrand's suppressions.

Among the nunneries that were suppressed by Bertrand de Pouget, one was Augustinian (Sant'Agostino), three were Camaldolese Benedictine (Santa Maria di Ravone, San Nicolò della Casa di Dio, and probably San Salvatore), and the rest were autonomous Benedictine convents (San Colombano, Santi Gervasio e Protasio, and possibly Santa Croce). Most of them had been founded within the previous hundred years – three in the 1250s, one in the 1280s, one in the first years of the fourteenth century – but two were Benedictine houses that dated back at least to the first years of the twelfth century.⁵⁸

This shuffling of religious assets involved two actions – unifying the nunneries' property with that of the collegiate churches and suppressing the corporation to which the inhabitants of the nunneries belonged. Santa Maria di Ravone and San Nicolò della Casa di Dio and Santa Croce were unified into San Michele dei Leprosetti; Sant'Agostino and San Salvatore were unified with San Sigismondo; and San Colombano's goods went to a collegiate church of the same name.⁵⁹ In the initial decree of March 1332, however, there was no provision for the specific nunnery to which the nuns would go, other than that they should go to a nunnery of the same order as theirs.⁶⁰ At this point, the dispersed nuns went to their new nunneries without any of the goods or money that they had brought with them when they made their vows.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 168, 177–8, 199–200, 213–14, and 218.

⁵⁹ See, as above, Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 168, 177–8, 199–200, 213–14, and 218.

⁶⁰ Mittarelli and Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses*, 5: col. 505. See note 51 above for the language of the decree.

⁶¹ Guiseppe Guidicini, *Cose notabili della città di Bologna*, 5 vols. (Bologna: Forni, 1972), 3: 48–9.

There is little information about the population of the nunneries and the fate of the inhabitants after their houses were suppressed. In some cases, documents survive that give us a glimpse of the aftermath of the suppressions. A decree from Bertrand in September 1332 instructed the Benedictines of Santi Gervasio e Protasio and San Colombano to divide between two other nunneries of the same order (San Vitale and Santa Margherita).⁶² The nuns of San Nicolò della Casa di Dio appear to have all transferred to Santa Cristina, which, like San Nicolò, was a Camaldolese nunnery.⁶³

Two years after the suppressions of these nunneries, Bertrand de Pouget was expelled from the city. While his army was away on an expedition to fight Ferrara, a group of citizens held him and his retinue hostage and fought off the legate's army.⁶⁴ After Bertrand fled to Florence, six of the seven suppressed communities were able to re-establish their old nunneries – only San Nicolò della Casa di Dio remained in the convent in which the nuns had taken refuge. The Bolognese chronicler Guidicini mentions that in the year 1334, the sisters appeared before the Bolognese city council to state their plea.⁶⁵ They argued that Bertrand had despoiled them of their goods and expelled them from their nunneries without a provision of any dowry. They wanted to have their goods restored. The surviving documents do not make it possible to establish whether all of the nuns in the suppressed convents returned to their old houses once they had been reconstituted or whether some of them had assimilated into their new houses.

⁶² ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 10/4494, no. 7 fol. 1r (later copy of document from September 7, 1332).

⁶³ Mittarelli and Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses*, 5: 348.

⁶⁴ Cherubino Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, 2 vols. (1657; Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1973), 2: 111–12.

⁶⁵ Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, 4: 48–9.

Of the communities that re-established themselves in 1334, only one, Santi Gervasio e Protasio, was able to survive beyond the middle of the fourteenth century. The rest were suppressed again during the period in which Cardinal Albornoz governed the city. Guidicini says that he did so in an attempt to reinstate the earlier decrees of Bertrand de Pouget.⁶⁶ The Benedictine nunnery of San Colombano had been able to regain its possessions from the collegiate church in 1334, but it survived only until 1347, when it was suppressed a second time and its goods returned to the collegiate church of San Colombano.⁶⁷ Its procurator appealed the decision, first to the bishop of Bologna and then to the archbishop of Ravenna, arguing that they did not want their house to be reduced from one that followed the Rule of Saint Benedict to one inhabited by clerics who did not follow a rule. Their appeals, however, were unsuccessful.⁶⁸

Sant'Agostino survived a few years longer than did San Colombano and was disbanded in 1352, and, like San Colombano, its property was returned to the collegiate church which had received the goods in 1332, San Sigismondo. It is the only nunnery for which a record of the fate of individual nuns exists, and only two nuns are mentioned. In August 1352, San Sigismondo acknowledged that it owed 50 Bolognese lire to the nunneries to which the women had transferred. One of these nuns, Sister Blasia Guasconi, transferred to San Lorenzo, which, like Sant'Agostino, followed the Rule of Saint Augustine. Another nun, Sister Margarita di Stefano, had gone first to Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore, an Augustinian convent, and then had finally entered Santa Maria del Cestello, which was Cistercian.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, 4: 138. ⁶⁷ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 168 n. 9; 177.

⁶⁸ Mittarelli and Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses*, 5: 348.

⁶⁹ ASB Dem., SS. Leonardo e Orsola, 6/3248, no. 20; Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 168 n. 9.

In March 1352, she had formally professed the Rule of Saint Benedict, joining the six nuns who were living in that house.⁷⁰

The Camaldolese house Santa Maria di Ravone survived until 1357, the year that its abbess, Margarita, died. It is not clear whether other nuns remained and what their fate was after the nunnery was turned over to Camaldolese monks in that year.⁷¹ By 1366, some of this property was again in the hands of the collegiate church of San Michele dei Leprosetti.⁷² The only house to survive was Santi Gervasio e Protasio, a Benedictine house that dated back to the early twelfth century and endured until the Napoleonic invasion, when all monastic houses, both male and female, were suppressed.

There is no way to be sure why Bertrand chose to disband these particular nunneries. Some chroniclers indicate that the suppressions happened because of deficiencies in the nunneries.⁷³ Allegations of immoral behavior or poor management of resources were commonplace when a prelate or monastic house aimed to remove nuns (or occasionally monks) from their monasteries and divert the property to other uses. Thus, they cannot be taken at face value.⁷⁴ The fact that the city council allowed them to be re-established two years after the original suppressions suggests that the nunneries were not such a source of scandal that the governors of Bologna thought that they should remain suppressed. There is no indication of the number of nuns in these nunneries, so we cannot know if they were chosen because they were depopulated. For most of the nunneries, there

⁷⁰ ASB Dem., SS. Leonardo e Orsola, 6/3248, no. 19.

⁷¹ Mittarelli and Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses*, 6: 49; Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 200.

⁷² Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 200.

⁷³ Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, 4: 138. Guidicini cites the chronicler Sigonio as an example of someone who made this accusation against the suppressed nunneries.

⁷⁴ Constance Berman, "'The Labors of Hercules': The Cartulary, Church and Abbey for Nuns of la Cour-Notre-Dame-de-Michery," *Journal of Medieval History* 26.1 (2000): 43–5.

is little financial information to indicate whether they were poor or wealthy. The only exception is Santi Gervasio e Protasio, which was financially stable enough that a group of Augustinian nuns wanted to unite with it in 1381, citing its wealth among the virtues that caused them to choose it as their new home.⁷⁵ The only clue in Bertrand's decree for his reasoning in suppressing these nunneries is that he chose nunneries from the orders of Saint Benedict, Saint Augustine, and Camaldoli. One noticeable commonality between the Benedictines and the Augustinians was that they did not have a strong organizational structure at this time, and nunneries belonging to these orders lacked many of the privileges of more developed orders such as the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Cistercians. This explanation does not account for the presence of Camaldolese nunneries on the list. Nunneries seem to have been well integrated into the Camaldolese Order, and the nunnery of Santa Cristina della Fondazza in Bologna remained an important member of their congregation.

As far as the nuns were concerned, the fact that all but one of the suppressed houses succeeded in re-establishing themselves suggests that it was not enough for them to be among sisters of their own order – they identified primarily with the house in which they had been professed. Though a significant part of their argument of the injustice of the suppressions involved the lack of financial provision, the end solution in 1334 was not a financial settlement to the nuns and to the houses to which they had transferred, but the reconstitution of the nunneries themselves.

An interaction between local and papal government that can be compared to Bertrand's suppressions is the consolidation of nunneries in Florence during the residency of Pope Eugenius IV in that city.

⁷⁵ ASB Dem., 13/4497, no. 15. The Augustinian nuns of S. Maria di Pontemaggiore, which was originally from Florence but moved to Bologna during the worst days of the Black Death, chose to unite with the Benedictine SS. Gervasio e Protasio in 1381.

In 1435, Eugenius ordered the nuns from seven different Florentine convents to be consolidated into only two houses. This included the incorporation of four convents that either had few inhabitants or that the pope considered insufficiently rigorous into the Observant Benedictine community of Sant'Agata.⁷⁶ As was the case with the Bolognese suppressions, the city intervened, this time after only a year, to reach an agreement with the pope to allow the re-establishment of the suppressed convents. Both the city and the pope provided subsidies to aid in this process.⁷⁷ Eugenius's successor, Nicholas V, repeated the suppression of many of these re-established houses in the 1440s, much as Cardinal Albornoz had done to the Bolognese nunneries that had re-emerged after Bertrand's expulsion.

Though popes and cardinals could suppress religious houses without holding political power in a city, it seems that mass suppressions were more likely to happen in periods during which high-ranking religious officials held local political influence. In the Florentine case, Eugenius IV promoted Observant reform, consolidating the resources of several convents and placing them under the authority of favored communities. Similarly, the resources of women's monastic communities in the fourteenth century proved to be a tempting source for financing the priorities of resident cardinal governors.

COMMUNAL SUPPORT FOR RELIGIOUS HOUSES IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

It is useful at this point to return to considering the city's support for religious women in the wake of the suppressions under Bertrand

⁷⁶ Strocchia, *Nuns and Nunneries*, 21 and 204 n. 80.

⁷⁷ Trexler, *The Women of Renaissance Florence*, 25 n. 93.

de Pouget. There is an indication that the city made an effort to help some of the re-established houses. For example, the only exception to the city's preference for giving grain to nunneries in the mid fourteenth century is their monetary donation of 25 lire to Sant'Agostino di Fossa Cavallina. Remarks in the donations suggest that the writers of the statutes were aware of the difficulties facing some of these communities. For instance, the donations of fifteen *corbe* of grain both to San Salvatore and to Santa Croce are predicated on these communities having found a convent in which to live. Despite the city's support for some of the convents that were re-established after their suppression, the city continued the pattern of excluding Benedictine houses until the very end of the century, when Santi Gervasio e Protasio, the only house to survive the suppressions of both Bertrand de Pouget and Cardinal Alborno, received 5 lire from the city.

The 1335 statutes demonstrate a pattern that would hold for most of the fourteenth century. As was the case with the 1288 statutes, donations to religious women were less generous than had been the case in the mid thirteenth century, though the smaller size of these donations is offset by their more even allocation. The method of distributing the support is gifts of grain, ranging from a low of five to twenty *corbe*, with the exception of one convent that received 25 lire.⁷⁸ In the 1335, 1352, and 1357 statutes, twenty-one communities are recipients of this food support. While the fourteenth century saw the city begin to give generous donations to older houses of Benedictine monks, in general Benedictine nunneries that were not part of reformed orders remained excluded. Though some Camaldolese

⁷⁸ Anna Laura Trombetti Budriesi, ed., *Lo statuto del comune di Bologna dell'anno 1335* (Rome: Istituto Palazzo Borromini, 2008), 379–84.

houses received aid, this did not extend to the oldest Bolognese nunnery of this order, Santa Cristina della Fondazza, despite the fact that Santa Cristina had received regular donations in the thirteenth century. Noticeable omissions in city giving were the Clarissans of San Francesco and the Dominicans of Sant'Agnese, San Giovanni Battista, and Santa Maria Maddalena di Valdi Pietra.⁷⁹ Thus, the generous donations to houses of mendicant friars beginning in the late thirteenth century and continuing through the fourteenth century did not hold for giving to religious women. By the end of the fourteenth century, nunneries once again received monetary donations, though the amounts were small, ranging from 5 to 15 lire. As had become the case with houses of religious men, the city government designated specific feast days on which to distribute the aid, integrating nunneries into the calendar of religious giving.

CONCLUSIONS

Monastic houses were an important element of civic infrastructure. Cities provided aid in grain and money to some pious institutions, and the records of these distributions can provide insight into the city's religious priorities. During the city's golden era in the thirteenth century, the city council, through the podesta, provided support to religious communities, especially to those who were engaged in building their church or monastery. Nearly all houses of religious women received some form of support, ranging from modest donations of grain to substantial monetary gifts. These larger gifts were frequently accompanied by acknowledgements that the money was

⁷⁹ Braidì, *Statuti del comune*, 283–8 (for 1352 and 1357) and 1116–20 (for 1376 and 1389).

intended to help the house to build a new convent or dormitory. In this era, a few houses of religious men (particularly Franciscan friars and Augustinian Hermits) received considerable help, also meant to aid in the building of churches. Well-established communities, both male and female, tended to be omitted from the city's largesse as recorded in statute. A probable explanation for this omission is that the city's new merchant-class governors preferred to support the religious houses in which their own daughters lived as nuns or that otherwise comported with their own religious goals, such as building churches for new mendicant communities.

After a period of turmoil beginning in the late thirteenth century and continuing through a variety of governmental changes in the fourteenth century, donations to religious women decreased in size, especially compared to the large gifts to communities of mendicant friars, made on feast days with important associations with the orders or the patron saints of these houses. The city also began to provide alms to venerable houses of monks and canons whose houses had been founded before the era of *popolo* government. This shift may mark a change in priorities from building and sustaining new monastic communities in favor of providing support to churches that were also centers of lay religious life, serving as meeting sites for confraternities.

The suppression of convents under Cardinal Bertrand de Pouget and the re-establishment of these houses after the cardinal's expulsion also demonstrate the intertwined nature of temporal and spiritual authority. Though the enthusiasm of secular leaders for providing monetary support for houses of nuns may have waned by the fourteenth century, they continued to make donations of grain and money. More importantly, they provided authority for the reconstitution of houses that had been suppressed under Bertrand. In

this way, temporal matters such as governing regimes could shape the city's religious environment. For religious women, these changes could mean the difference between support for founding and building new communities on the one hand, and suppression and displacement on the other.

Movement into the city

In 1249, three women from Santissima Trinità di Ronzano named Balena, Dotta, and Marina moved from their original monastery, which was located a few miles from the city of Bologna, to the depopulated oratory of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, also at a distance from the city.¹ They soon began to attract new recruits, and, only five years after they moved to their new location, they received a bequest of land in the suburbs of Bologna just outside the Porta Saragozza of Bologna's newly constructed wall and built the nunnery of San Mattia.² They first built a nunnery at San Mattia in the 1250s, and then in the 1290s built a church.³ Though San Mattia would become the primary home for most of the nunnery's population, the nuns kept Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia as a retreat and probably emphasized their ties to it in order to maintain its privilege of direct protection from the papacy, and to claim this privilege for their suburban nunnery. The nuns remained at San Mattia until their nunnery was destroyed in a war in 1357, at which time they moved to a new location on the Via Sant'Isaia inside the city walls.⁴ During the century between the initial move to Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia and the final relocation to the second

¹ Gozzadini, *Cronaca di Ronzano*, 130–1; Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 198.

² ASB Dem., San Mattia, 5/5766, no. 8.

³ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 7/5768, not numbered, dated August 29, 1294.

⁴ Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, 2: 299; Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 210.

location of San Mattia on the Via Sant'Isaia, this group of nuns was required to spend a great deal of time, effort, and money on building and maintaining an adequate and safe domicile.

Though other communities did not move as often as Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia and San Mattia, their story fits a pattern of building and relocation that did occur in the population of Bolognese nunneries as a whole. In addition to practical matters such as finding a new location and financing the building of a new house or the repair of a house that had been abandoned by another community, the relocation of a convent could raise issues related to religious life. In some cases, the community endeavored to maintain ties to the original site to retain an important element of their history and identity. Changes in location could also invite changes in jurisdiction or in other forms of management.

PHASES OF MONASTIC BUILDING

The growth and decline of the number of nunneries in Bologna had four distinct phases. In the early phases of monastic building in Bologna, the location of the religious house and the time during which it was built give important information about its devotional inclinations. Traditional Benedictine houses built in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries were located just outside the inner wall but inside the area soon to be encircled by the second wall, which would be built in the mid twelfth century.⁵ Four houses fit this description: San Colombano, Santi Gervasio e Protasio, Santa Margherita, and Santi Vitale e Agricola, which were all established by the 1110s.⁶ The exception was Santa Cristina di Stifonte, one of the first nunneries of

⁵ For more on the building of the city's walls, see Chapter 1, pp. 24–6.

⁶ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 177, 183–4, 190–1, 218–19.

the nascent Camaldolese order of Benedictines; Santa Cristina was established over twelve miles from the city.

After this initial period in which these Benedictine nunneries were built in the then-suburban area of the city just outside the first walls, new religious establishments that housed women tended to be ascetic groups that followed a rule other than those of Augustine or Benedict, and which usually also included men. These religious houses were built at a distance from the city. The houses founded during this period were Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, Santissima Trinità di Ronzano, and Santa Caterina di Quarto.⁷ Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia was founded by a hermitess in 1193 and eventually also housed a group of priests or canons.⁸ Santa Caterina di Quarto, founded in 1205, also contained both men and women and would form the basis for a small congregation that would follow their community's form of life. The details of Santissima Trinità di Ronzano's early years are less sure. Although some accounts place the group's foundation in the 1140s, no documents survive from that period for Santissima Trinità – the first records date to the first decade of the thirteenth century.⁹ The exception to the rural trend in this period is again a Camaldolese house, Santa Maria di Biliemme, which was founded in the suburbs of Bologna in the last years of the twelfth century.

A third phase of building concentrated around the city gates, both inside and just outside the city walls, began with the construction of the Dominican nunnery of Sant'Agnese in the Bolognese suburbs in 1223.¹⁰ This was the first house built after the arrival of the mendicant orders. The founder of this nunnery, Diana d'Andalò, originally fled to the rural community of Santissima Trinità, but chose to leave it

⁷ For more on the foundations of these nunneries, see Chapter 1.

⁸ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 196, 217–18.

⁹ Gozzadini, *Cronaca di Ronzano*, 10–11.

¹⁰ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 166.

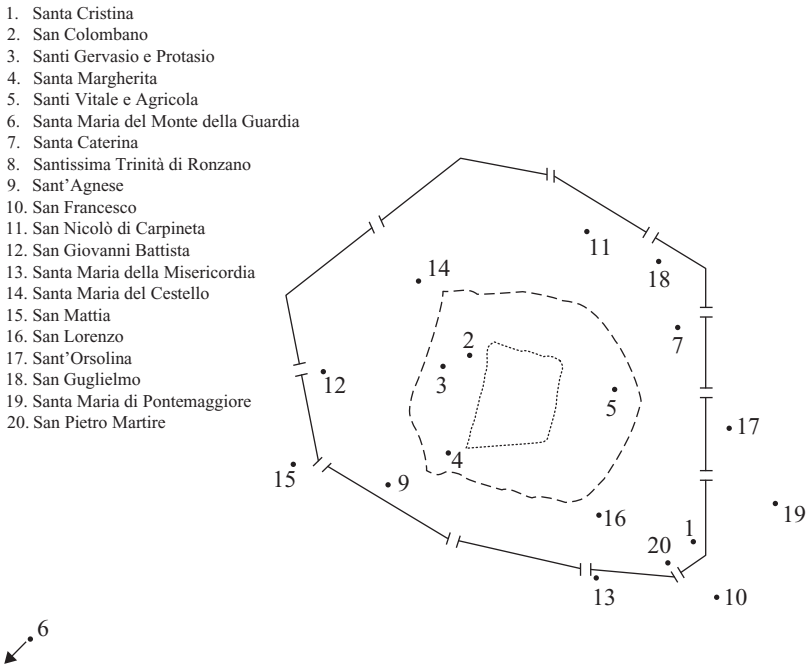
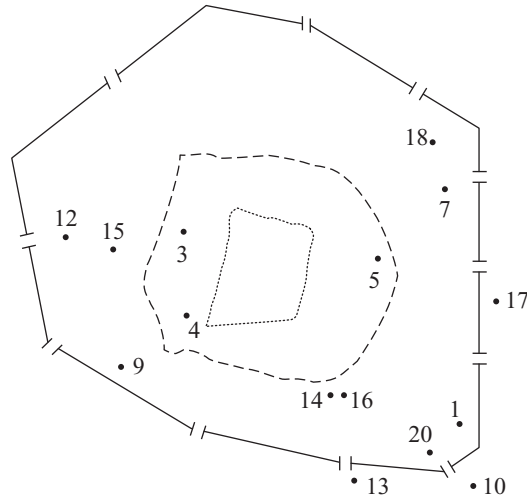


Figure 5.1 Nunneries in Bologna, 1300

to establish her own house that would be part of the Order of Preachers.¹¹ The growth of the mendicant orders in general, and the Dominican Order in particular, in Bologna coincided with greater emphasis on building in the city and in the suburbs just outside the walls. This phase of growth would last until the end of the thirteenth century. During this time, not only were new nunneries established in the city and suburbs, but the older establishments that had been located in the rural area, or the *contado*, controlled by Bologna would all find new homes closer to the city. The relocations of these rural

¹¹ On Diana's relationship with Dominic and his successor, Jordan of Saxony, as well as on her attempts to attain incorporation of her nunnery into the Dominican Order, see Chapter 2, pp. 56–61.

1. Santa Cristina
2. San Colombano
3. Santi Gervasio e Protasio
4. Santa Margherita
5. Santi Vitale e Agricola
6. Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia
7. Santa Caterina
8. Santissima Trinità di Ronzano
9. Sant' Agnese
10. San Francesco
11. San Nicolò di Carpineta
12. San Giovanni Battista
13. Santa Maria della Misericordia
14. Santa Maria del Cestello
15. San Mattia
16. San Lorenzo
17. Sant' Orsolina
18. San Guglielmo
19. Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore
20. San Pietro Martire



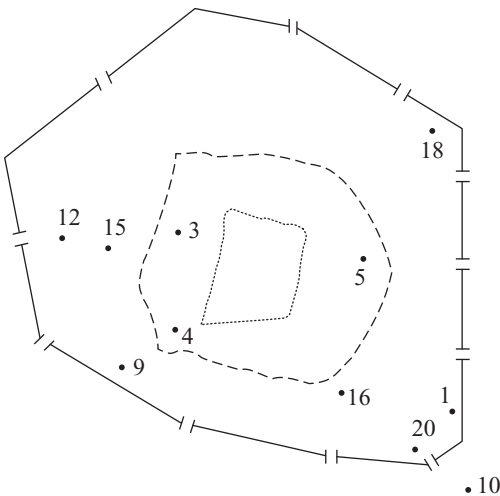
• 6

Figure 5.2 Nunneries in Bologna, 1400

establishments were partially motivated by the need to compete with urban and suburban nunneries for recruits and donations.

The building of new nunneries in the city in the thirteenth century occurred because the growth and vibrancy of the city exercised a positive attraction on communities of nuns as well as on others who moved in and contributed to Bologna's expansion. By contrast, in the fourth and final phase of building and movement of nunneries, religious communities fled the warfare of the *contado* and sought refuge within the city walls (see Figures 5.1–5.3). This phase took place from the mid fourteenth century and persisted into the fifteenth century. This period was not a time of growth. The number of

- 1. Santa Cristina
- 2. San Colombano
- 3. Santi Gervasio e Protasio
- 4. Santa Margherita
- 5. Santi Vitale e Agricola
- 6. Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia
- 7. Santa Caterina
- 8. Santissima Trinità di Ronzano
- 9. Sant' Agnese
- 10. San Francesco
- 11. San Nicolò di Carpineta
- 12. San Giovanni Battista
- 13. Santa Maria della Misericordia
- 14. Santa Maria del Cestello
- 15. San Mattia
- 16. San Lorenzo
- 17. Sant'Orsolina
- 18. San Guglielmo
- 19. Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore
- 20. San Pietro Martire



.6

Figure 5.3 Nunneries in Bologna, 1500

nunneries declined, even with the foundation of a few new houses. Security was the main catalyst for these moves; the constant war among cities made it unsafe for many of the communities that had remained outside of the city walls during the thirteenth century to continue to live in the *contado* and the suburbs.

Table 5.1 shows the number of nunneries inside the city walls, in the suburbs just outside of the city, and in the *contado* at fifty-year intervals.¹² Table 5.2 shows the fluctuation in the number

¹² Much of the information for this table is drawn from Zarri, “Monasteri femminili,” 166–219. The closest nunnery in the *contado* is Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, which is approximately 2 km from the last circle of the city’s walls.

Table 5.1 *Total number of nunneries in Bologna by location*

Year	1100	1150	1200	1250	1300	1350	1400	1450	1500
City		4	4	9	15	13	16	17	16
Suburb		0	1	7	16	11	10	4	5
<i>Contado</i>	1	1	3	5	4*	2*	2*	1*	1*
Total	1	5	8	21	35	26	28	22	22

* After 1254, one of these nunneries in the *contado*, Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, was a rural oratory for a suburban nunnery, San Mattia.

Table 5.2 *Change in number of nunneries by location*

Year	1100	1150	1200	1250	1300	1350	1400	1450	1500
City		+4		+5	+6	+3/-5	+3	+1	+1/-2
Suburb			+1	+6	+9	+1/-6	+1/-2	-6	+1
<i>Contado</i>	+1		+2	+3/-1	+2/-3	-2		-1	
Total	+1	+4	+3	+13	+14	-9	+2	-6	0

of nunneries. Positive numbers indicate the number of new foundations and recently relocated nunneries in an area; negative numbers indicate the number of suppressions and nunneries that move away from the area. At its peak in the late thirteenth century, there were thirty-five nunneries in Bologna and its surrounding area, of which fifteen were located within the city walls and sixteen were in the suburban area, with the remaining four in the *contado*. From this point in time, the number of urban nunneries would remain relatively stable, despite a slight dip in the first half of the fourteenth century. The suburban nunneries, however, would continue to decline in number. In the first half of the fourteenth century, only one new suburban nunnery was founded, while six folded for various reasons. Even within the perimeter of the city, there were still dangers. One

nunnery, Santa Maria del Cestello, was located within the urban area, but at a point where the walls were not yet finished. It was also next to a fortress that was a site where fighting frequently occurred. It is not clear whether the nunnery suffered actual damages, but the nuns did not feel secure in that location and chose to move to a safer area inside the wall on the Via Castiglione.¹³

Another large decrease in the number of suburban nunneries occurred in the first half of the fifteenth century. In 1400, there were ten nunneries in the area immediately outside the city walls. By 1450, only four of these remained. Much of this decline was because of fighting between Bologna and other city-states, principally Ferrara. Some of the nunneries that had been located outside the walls were able to find new locations within the city. By this time, only one establishment survived in the *contado* (Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia), and it was not autonomous, but rather was part of San Mattia, a nunnery whose main residence had moved into the city from the suburbs in the mid fourteenth century. Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia served as an oratory where small numbers of nuns from San Mattia could retreat for prayer, and thus was probably not continuously occupied as a nunnery. Thus, by the end of the fifteenth century, the vast majority of nunneries existed inside the city walls.

Whether because of attraction to the urban environment in the thirteenth century or because of need for the protection that the city walls provided in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, many nunneries moved from their original location to the area enclosed by the city walls. An investigation of the effects that these moves had on religious communities highlights the precariousness of women's monastic life. For some ascetic, rural religious groups, the change in

¹³ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 7/3249, no. 3.

environment coincided with reforms and changes in monastic rule that made them conform to practices like those of other urban nunneries and tended to align them with the Augustinian and Dominican Orders. In many cases throughout the period under investigation, issues involving the communities' original property continued to arise. The groups also incurred the additional expense of building. Moreover, once in the city, competition for resources among monastics could lead to further instability, as some older nunneries with houses in poor repair because of war or their age sought to gain newer nunneries for themselves.

THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY AND INURBIMENTO

The first nunnery to move from the *contado* to the city was Santa Cristina di Stifonte, which became known as Santa Cristina della Fondazza once it moved into its new house on the Via della Fondazza. An important Camaldolese nunnery, Santa Cristina was originally located far from the city, approximately twelve miles southeast of Bologna in an area known as Ozzano.¹⁴ Founded around 1100, it was one of the earliest nunneries of the order.¹⁵ Its first abbess, Mathilda, was the daughter of the patrons of the first Camaldolese nunnery, San Pietro di Luco in Florence, though the precise relationship between the two houses is unclear.¹⁶

In March 1245, the nuns of Santa Cristina decided to move into the city. In that year, the bishop of Bologna, Giacomo Boncambio, blessed the first stone of their new church and monastery, located

¹⁴ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 178.

¹⁵ Monson, *Divas in the Convent*, 31. Monson notes that, by tradition, the convent was founded in 1097, but the earliest papal recognition of the convent dates to 1125.

¹⁶ Cécile Caby, *De l'érémisme rural au monachisme urbain: les Camaldules en Italie à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1999), 108–9.

in the southeast quarter of the area enclosed by the *cerchia ultima*.¹⁷ Though neither the nuns nor the bishop ever articulated a reason for Santa Cristina's move, it follows a general pattern for Camaldolese in that era – the transformation of that order from one based on rural eremitic settlements to urban cenobitic houses, a process Cécile Caby describes as *inurbimento*.¹⁸ Like their monastic brethren, Camaldolese nuns tended to move their houses to the city. New orders in this period, such as the Dominicans and Franciscans, also founded houses for friars and nuns inside the city or just outside the walls.

One of the difficulties for Santa Cristina caused by the move from a rural to an urban setting was a dispute over the relationship between the nuns and the bishop. As a member of the Order of Camaldoli, Santa Cristina had enjoyed a papal privilege exempting it from episcopal oversight. When the nuns moved into the city and began to build their new house, the bishop dedicated the first stone. By accepting the bishop's authority to perform this symbolic act, the nuns agreed to submit themselves to the bishop's jurisdiction and to pay him an annual sum of a pound of wax.¹⁹ In June 1246, the order appointed two officials, Jacobus and Peter, to visit the nunnery. They rebuked the nuns for having agreed to this. The following year, the

¹⁷ Mittarelli and Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses*, 6: col. 586.

¹⁸ Caby, *Les Camaldules*, 4–5. This trend was not only true of Camaldolese in Italy; there is a clear relationship between the growth of cities and the development of the mendicant orders. For more on the growth of urban monasticism in France, see Jacques Le Goff, "Apostolat mendiant et fait urbain dans la France médiévale: l'implantation des ordres mendiants, programme-questionnaire pour une enquête," *Annales ESC* 23.2 (1968): 335–48; Le Goff, "Ordres mendiants et urbanisation dans la France médiévale," *Annales ESC* 25.4 (1970): 924–46. For Italy, specifically on the relationship between the city and the mendicant orders, see Enrico Guidoni, "Città e ordini mendicanti: il ruolo dei conventi nella crescita e nella progettazione urbana del XIII e XIV secolo," *Quaderni Medievali* 4 (1977): 69–106; and Gregorio Penco, "Un aspetto della società medievale Italiana: il rapporto monasteri-città," *Benedictina* 26.1 (1979): 1–17.

¹⁹ Mittarelli and Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses*, 4: cols. 586–7.

bishop allowed the nuns of Santa Cristina di Stifonte to move to their new nunnery of Santa Cristina della Fondazza and required them to continue to pay the census fee of a pound of wax because of his role in founding the new house.²⁰ They were allowed, however, to retain the exemption that they had enjoyed in their original location.²¹

Santa Cristina was not the only community in the Camaldolese order that transferred from its rural origins to a new house in the city, as described in Cécile Caby's discussion of the general change in the nature of the Camaldolese Order. The hermit Romuald founded a settlement that would be the beginning of the Camaldolese Order, a semi-eremitic order, in the eleventh century. In the same community, some members would be hermits who were reclusive in their cells, some lived in cells but took meals with other monks, and some may have lived in a common dormitory and eaten in a common room. The central house of the order was a hermitage, Camaldoli, in the province of Arezzo. While many Camaldolese houses remained in the *contado* of northern Italian cities and continued to be built at a distance from urban areas, a sizable percentage of foundations were urban, and these tended to be more cenobitic, though urban hermitages did exist.²² Houses of nuns differed from their male counterparts in that they were entirely cenobitic. Early nunneries tended to be located in rural areas, but by the late twelfth century some nunneries were founded close to cities, and in the thirteenth century many rural nunneries moved into cities or suburbs. For example, in Tuscany the first nunnery to move from the *contado* into Florence did so in 1257; this first transfer was followed by a number of others continuing into the fourteenth century, including the nunnery that gave birth to Santa Cristina, San Pietro di Luco,

²⁰ Mittarelli and Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses*, 4: 370.

²¹ Caby, *Les Camaldules*, 242. ²² Caby, *Les Camaldules*, 207–34.

which built a new house in Florence when its old one was destroyed in war in 1354.²³

While the population of Santa Cristina transferred to the city en masse, another rural house, Santissima Trinità di Ronzano, a member of the congregation of San Marco of Mantua, gave rise to several new communities when colonies of women broke off from it and built new houses in the city and suburbs. The colonies moved from Santissima Trinità to found new houses in the city or to re-establish depopulated nunneries. In 1239, three sisters formed the first group to leave Santissima Trinità. These sisters established the house of San Giovanni Battista, which quickly adopted the statutes of the Dominican Order; indeed, their inclinations toward the Dominican Order may have been the reason they decided to leave Santissima Trinità. The sisters built their new nunnery on the Via Sant'Isaia in the Borgo Sant'Isaia, an area that was at that time a suburb of the southwestern part of the city but that would soon be included in the perimeter of the third and final wall.²⁴

The next group to leave Santissima Trinità was also made up of three women who left the nunnery, probably answering an appeal from the remaining canon living in the foundation on the Monte della Guardia, slightly closer to the city than Santissima Trinità but still at a distance from the city. They were allowed to move to that location to re-establish the house of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia in 1249.²⁵ But Santa Maria del Monte would not be their primary residence for long. In 1254, the nuns of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia received a bequest from the estate of Emma, daughter of Canonico di Saragozza.²⁶ They decided to build a new nunnery on the suburban land they had inherited from Emma. They named this

²³ Caby, *Les Camaldules*, 235–43.

²⁴ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 3/4487, no. 11. See also Chapter 1, pp. 43–4, and Chapter 3, 96–9.

²⁵ Gozzadini, *Cronaca di Ronzano*, 16. ²⁶ Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, 2: 299.

new house San Mattia, and some of the sisters from the original house on the Monte della Guardia moved into the new nunnery.²⁷ They shared a prioress, and both houses were usually mentioned in any correspondence to the community.

In addition to building the house in which the nuns lived, the sisters of San Mattia also needed to build a church. Perhaps because of a lack of finances, they were not able to do this immediately; rather, they waited until the 1290s. In 1294, Teodorico, bishop of Cervia, blessed the first stone of their new church on the order of the papal legate Hildebrand.²⁸ By ensuring that the bishop of Bologna was not involved in the groundbreaking for their new church and that the bishop of Cervia was acting as a papal representative, San Mattia guarded against challenges to their exemption from episcopal jurisdiction. During the years between the building of the convent and that of the church, several bishops issued indulgences to the faithful of their diocese if they would visit San Mattia and give alms to help in the construction of the new facility. In May 1271, Bishop Ottaviano of Bologna sent out a request “to all archbishops and bishops to whom this letter will come” to issue indulgences to aid San Mattia.²⁹ In his request, he told his readers that

the monastery and church of San Mattia the Apostle is being built near the moat of the city of Bologna outside of the Borgo Santa Caterina on a public street, in which the noble ladies, religious sisters of the order of the blessed Augustine, in order to carry out penance remain during their lives in celebration of divine things, and conducting prayers and untiring vigils for the salvation of their own souls and the souls of others of Christ’s faithful.³⁰

²⁷ Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, 2: 299–302.

²⁸ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 7/5768, not numbered, dated August 29, 1294.

²⁹ “universes archiepiscopis et episcopis ad quos littere presentes advenerit.” ASB Dem., San Mattia, 6/5767, no. 7.

³⁰ “quod cum monasterium et ecclesia sancti mathie apostoli apud foveam civitatis Bononiensis extra burgum sancti katrine supra stratam publicam sit constructum in quo nobiles domine religiose sorores ordinis beati augustini ad gerendam penitenciam commorantur

In the next few years, at least seven prelates would issue indulgences to those who visited San Mattia and gave alms, including Pope Gregory X.³¹

Following the foundations of San Giovanni Battista and the repopulation of Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, the final colony left Santissima Trinità di Ronzano in 1265, the year the monastery was turned over to the military order of the Frati Gaudenti. These women moved into a house that had been abandoned in the previous decade by a group of Benedictine monks who had chosen to unite with a house of Augustinian Hermits.³² For a few years, the nuns continued to follow the rule of their former nunnery, but sometime in the fourteenth century they adopted the Augustinian Rule and the statutes of the Dominican Order.³³

For all three of these groups of women, the move from Santissima Trinità to a new urban or suburban nunnery was followed by a change of rule from that of Saint Mark of Mantua, the rule of their original home, to the Augustinian Rule and perhaps the statutes of the Dominican Order. The move of another rural nunnery, Santa Caterina, to the city was also accompanied by changes in the rule and in the nature of the community itself. On January 3, 1291, the bishop of Bologna's vicar, Leonardo of Cesena, gave the *magistra*, friars, and sisters of Santa Caterina the right to alienate property and to assume debt in order to build a new nunnery near the church of Santa Maria Maddelena.³⁴ They moved into the city that same year.

vitam suam celebracioni divinorum et oracionum et vigiliis assidue deducentes pro suarum et aliorum Christi fidelium animarum salute et locus ipse et ecclesia tam earundem." ASB Dem., San Mattia, 6/5767, no. 7.

³¹ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 6/5767, nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 6, 10, 32.

³² Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 208. ³³ Gozzadini, *Cronaca di Ronzano*, 17.

³⁴ "ut in ea possint predictae sorores liberius et habilis cum aliis familiaribus sibi necessariis permanere nec non et pro aliis utilitatibus et necessitatibus dicti monasterii et sororum et maxime pro expensis necessariis ut faciendis circa translationem monasterii et domorum et personarum ipsius." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 7/4491, no. 13.

This was not the first attempt to move at least part of the population of Santa Caterina di Quarto. In 1250, the pope sent the abbot of a nearby monastery to investigate and reform the community of Santa Caterina. The main issue of the visit was to ascertain that the men and women were living in separate houses. The letter from Pope Innocent IV to the prior of Santa Caterina explains that the inquisitor wanted to move the women to the nearby church of San Giovanni di Castenaso, but could not gain the approval of that church's clergy and patrons.³⁵ Innocent therefore decided to allow the brothers and sisters to remain at Santa Caterina under one pastor, but they were to live in different houses and to remain separated from one another.³⁶

Nine years later, Innocent's successor, Pope Alexander IV, instructed his legate, Cardinal Henry of Segusio, to investigate the church again regarding two issues. One was the number of inhabitants, which was growing too large for the foundation's means, and the other was the existence of statutes or practices outside of the Augustinian Rule. The legate again sent the abbot of a nearby monastery to look into matters. The investigator found eight clerics, twenty-five lay brothers (*conversi*), and sixty sisters. After receiving the report and consulting with others, Henry decreed that new clerics or lay brothers could be accepted into the monastery, "lest by their absence the worship of the Divine Name seem to grow cold," but ordered that no more women be accepted into the church.³⁷ Thus it appears that despite the larger number of women in the house, the

³⁵ "Verum quia iuxta quod disponere proposuerant ut mulieres in ecclesia Sancti Johannis de Castinesio virique in ecclesia Sancte Caterine manerent seorsum quorundam patronorum ecclesie sancti Johannis pertinacia non permisit. Statuentes quasi quadam necessitate compulsi ut in ecclesia sancte Caterine sub uno pastore diversis tamen domibus et abinvicem separatis periter habitetis." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 4/4488, no. 12.

³⁶ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 4/4488, no. 12.

³⁷ "ne per horum absentiam videatur in dicto monasterio cultus divini nominis refrigere." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 5/4489, no. 15.

legate considered the priests and lay brothers to be the heart of the community.

Regarding the customs of the monastery that were not part of the Augustinian Rule, he also modified some of the more austere practices. For instance, when one of them, either male or female, might leave the grounds after getting the required permission from the prior, if they were to stay overnight as a guest, they were now to be allowed to sleep in a bed, though they had previously been refused this comfort:

When any of you, whether friars or sisters, undertake to leave the monastery for a legitimate cause after obtaining the necessary permission, or perhaps by the authority of your superior you will be sent out, so that it will not seem burdensome to those who will have received you as guests out of reverence for God, that they have prepared a bed for you that you nevertheless do not use because of your zeal, . . . with thanksgiving, you may lie in an honest bed that will be prepared for you.³⁸

In this modification of Santa Caterina's practices, Henry placed emphasis on the necessity of receiving hospitality graciously, which for him superseded some concerns of religious fervor. He implies that both men and women may have reason to leave the monastic community on travels that require overnight lodging. His inclusion of this provision among a list of seven changes to Santa Caterina's practices indicates that the issue of accommodation during travel, for both men and women, arose often enough to merit comment.³⁹

³⁸ "Ceterum cum vos tam fratres quam sorores extra monasterium vestrum obtenta debita licentia ex aliqua iusta causa egredi contingerit vel forsán superioris vestri auctoritate missi fueritis, ne fortasse hiis qui ob dei reverentiam in hospitibus suis vos receperint videamini onerosi, ut in lectis pro vobis nullo tamen per vos studio adhibito preparatis . . . in lectis honestis sicut vobis paratum fuerit cum gratiarum actionibus iacere possitis." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 5/4489, no. 15.

³⁹ Of the seven changes in practice prescribed by the legate, three concerned vestments; one concerned the litany for the men; one mandated that both clerical and lay men should hold a chapter meeting once a week; and one stated that the statutes should be read in the men's

Finally, in 1291, the residents of Santa Caterina di Quarto moved into the parish of Santa Maria Maddelena, inside the walls of Bologna, a union between Santa Caterina and the parish church.⁴⁰ Though the brothers moved into town along with the sisters, their numbers dwindled and soon Santa Caterina was a house of nuns with a prior at its head and some *conversi* associated with it, in spite of the emphasis in 1259 on maintaining or enlarging the male population of the community. Like San Mattia and Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, the group was frequently referred to by the combined names of the original nunnery and their new location.⁴¹

As with the rule change in the mid thirteenth century, the transfer of location was followed by a few re-examinations of the church's constitutions and statutes, both of which resulted in increased specificity regarding the behavior prescribed for the sisters. Both modifications of the constitution occurred in the wake of papal or diocesan reforms regulating nuns. The first of the changes of Santa Caterina's statutes in the years after its move into the city occurred in 1298, the same year that the pope, Boniface VIII, issued the bull *Periculoso*, which ordered stricter regulation of enclosure for women's communities. Whereas the previous standard for nunneries following either the Benedictine or the Augustinian Rule had been that a nun would travel with the permission of the abbess and in the company of older, trusted sisters, *Periculoso* specifically allows only two circumstances in which a nun might leave the cloister. One permitted reason was in the event that the abbess or a representative of the house was required to pledge an oath such as fealty to a lord. Even in this case, Boniface

refectory every day. The decrees concerning vestments stated that the inhabitants of Santa Caterina should wear brown vestments (*vestimenta brunelli*), that men were allowed to wear garments made of lamb, and women could wear garments of any hide except for goat. ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 5/4489, no. 15.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of unions and suppressions of nunneries, see Chapter 6.

⁴¹ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 7/4491, no. 14.

preferred that a procurator act in the abbess's place if at all possible. The only other circumstance under which a nun was permitted to leave the enclosure was if she had an illness that would make it dangerous for her to remain in the cloister. Scholars who have studied the implementation of this decree have determined that it was not immediately enforced, and that in many areas there is evidence that it was not well enforced in the late Middle Ages.⁴² Nevertheless, the concerns regarding the mobility of religious women that were expressed in *Periculoso* may have motivated these new elements of Santa Caterina's statutes.

The contents of Santa Caterina's 1298 statute modification demonstrate the growing discrepancy between the regulation of mobility for monks and nuns. Even after its move, regulations for Santa Caterina still included rules for both women and men. Whereas the constitution forty years earlier had allowed both brothers and sisters to travel, in the 1298 statutes only brothers are mentioned in any provisions that pertain to behavior outside the monastery or reasons for leaving.⁴³ In discussing the relations of the women to the outside world, the constitution assumed that the sisters would remain in the cloister and that their contact with others would take place in the context of receiving guests into a hostel inside the church compound but outside the cloister. This duty is performed by the *magistra*, the female head, accompanied by two or three older, trustworthy sisters. The prior is allowed to enter the sisters' cloister once or twice

⁴² Elizabeth Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: "Periculoso" and Its Commentators, 1298–1545* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 131–2.

⁴³ A provision regarding behavior outside the monastery in the 1259 constitution reads "Ceterum cum vos tam fratres quam sorores extra monasterium vestrum obtenta debita licentia ex aliqua iusta causa egredi." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 5/4489, no. 15; in 1298 a similar provision reads, "Si vero extra monasterium contenteret priorem ut fratres ire propter aliquam causam licitam et honestam." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 7/4491, no. 32.

a month for hearing confession or for providing other sacraments to the sisters.⁴⁴

The meeting at which these statutes were given took place in the choir of the sisters' church, and was attended by the prior and three brothers, the *magistra* and an unspecified number of sisters, in addition to the bishop's retinue. By 1301, the prior seems to have been the only brother remaining, and a papal legate consolidated that function with the vacant office of the parish priest. He provided that the prior and the sisters could choose a second priest to serve in the parish and the convent and should support that priest by taking him as a *converso* and giving him a stipend.⁴⁵ By this point, it is clear that Santa Caterina had fully become a nunnery. The sole vestige of its earlier status as a double monastery was the prior who remained a member of the community. This prior and his assistant provided for the parish church and offered a solution to the problem of the *cura monialium*.

In 1310, the bishop of Bologna took up the issue of enclosure among nuns in the diocese at a synod. The decrees of the meeting contain complaints that many nuns were not following Boniface's mandate. The tenor of the remarks in the record suggests that the main goals were keeping guests out of the cloister and regulating conversation at the gate or windows.⁴⁶ In 1318, the bishop's vicar visited Santa Caterina and compiled a list of specific punishments for transgressions, though it is not clear whether the list was meant to correct behavior he observed at the monastery or whether the list was meant only to anticipate punishment for actions that might occur. Though the vicar did make regulations regarding internal matters such as attentiveness in the choir and silence in the refectory,

⁴⁴ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 7/4491, nos. 31–2.

⁴⁵ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 8/4492, nos. 1–2.

⁴⁶ Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna no. 2251, fol. 25r.

the majority of the precepts involve the enclosure of nuns. One new regulation specifically prohibited speaking at the window or the gate to any person who was not a member of the monastery or its *familia* unless the nun had gained permission from the prior or *magistra* and was protected by the presence of two or three other sisters approved by the *magistra*, echoing the concerns addressed at the diocesan synod. The punishment for transgression was three days on bread and water. If a nun should admit anyone to the cloister without the permission of the bishop or his vicar, that nun would be denied a voice in the chapter meetings and would not be allowed to seek office without a dispensation from the bishop. The visitor reproved sisters for their habit of going outside the interior cloister to make bread, saying that the sisters were not allowed to leave the cloister for any reason without the permission of the bishop or vicar.⁴⁷ The transgression of this statute would result in excommunication, or in the case of repeated violations, imprisonment.⁴⁸

It is notable that the bishop was the authority for the reform of Santa Caterina's statutes. At its original location in Quarto Superiore, Santa Caterina had direct papal protection, and was not subject to the bishop. Innocent IV had bestowed this privilege on the community when he imposed the Augustinian Rule on them in the 1240s. Just as Santa Cristina nearly lost its exemption from episcopal jurisdiction when the bishop broke ground on its urban location in 1245, Santa Caterina's relocation must have given the bishop the opportunity to reclaim his authority over the house. Santa Cristina regained its previous status because of the intervention of Camaldolese officials. Santa Caterina had no such defenders to allow it to protect its old privilege.

⁴⁷ In a conversation on March 10, 2004, Maureen Miller suggested that the nuns may have been visiting their female relatives while baking bread outside of the convent.

⁴⁸ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 9/4493, no. 2.

Perhaps because of its original organization as an autonomous double monastery, Santa Caterina's rules, statutes, and constitution were subject to frequent scrutiny. Because of these changes, it is possible to examine papal and episcopal policy regarding the issue of enclosure and some aspects of the relationship between the brothers and sisters of that house. Soon after the group moved into the city, it came to be a nunnery and not a double house. In the twenty years after Santa Caterina became an urban nunnery, it went through three separate modifications of its rule. The severity of the penalties in the 1318 statute changes suggests that the nuns had some difficulty adapting to their new status and the urban environment.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEW NUNNERIES AND THEIR OLD PROPERTIES

Nunneries that moved from the *contado* to the city had to determine what to do with their rural holdings. In this period, in most cases the convent retained religious and economic ties with the old site. With San Mattia and Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia, the connection between the two remained clear – the oratory in the hills remained a part of the community. In the last half of the thirteenth century, the connection between the two houses would form a large part of the argument put forth by the prioresses of San Mattia that they should enjoy the same privileges held by Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia that had been gained by its foundress, Angelica.⁴⁹ The old site thus functioned both as a spiritual retreat and as a tie to the important privilege held by the original house.

⁴⁹ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 4/5765, not numbered, not dated (has number "42" written at top of document); ASB Dem., San Mattia, 6/5767, not numbered, not dated (has number "1" written in top-left corner).

Santa Cristina and Santa Caterina took longer to determine what, if any, importance the old house would retain. One question involved what to do with the relics of the old church. In her discussion of the issues raised when Camaldolese nunneries abandoned their rural nunneries for urban ones, Cécile Caby details the situation of Santa Cristina. When the nuns of Santa Cristina di Stifonte transferred into the city,

The community abandon[ed] some of the buildings of the rural monastery, but the church had roots and continue[d] to shelter the relics of the Blessed Lucia, mythical abbess, object of a courtly legend and a local cult, whom the nuns nevertheless abandoned. The site of Settifonti or Stifonte thus became a dependent house, like others belonging to the urban monastery, under the same title as Sant'Andrea d'Ozzano, probably inhabited by some *conversi*.⁵⁰

During a visit to Bologna in 1433, the Camaldolese prior general and famous humanist, Ambrogio Traversari, would pay a visit to the site of the old nunnery in order to visit the relics of Lucia and to read her *vita*, only to discover that no written record of the *beata*'s life existed.⁵¹ In addition to whatever connections the urban nunnery maintained with its rural origins because of the relics located there, there were economic ties as well. The maintenance of connections with the original site was also in part encouraged by the fact that as part of the nunnery's holdings in that area, Santa Cristina enjoyed seigniorial rights over the parish church of Pastino, which involved the right to name the priest and a share of the tithes.⁵²

⁵⁰ "[l]a communauté abandonne certes les bâtiments du monastère rural, mais l'église reste sur pieds et . . . continue d'abriter les reliques d'une bienheureuse Lucia, abbesse mythique, objet d'une légende courtoise et d'un culte local, qu'abandonnèrent pourtant les moniales. Le site de Settifonti ou Stifonte devint ainsi un suffragant comme les autres du monastère urbain, au même titre que Sant'Andrea d'Ozzano, vraisemblablement habité par quelques convers." Caby, *Les Camaldules*, 254.

⁵¹ Caby, *Les Camaldules*, 254–5. ⁵² Caby, *Les Camaldules*, 254.

Religious and economic reasons played a role in the relationship between the urban nunnery of Santa Caterina di Quarto e Santa Maria Maddelena and its original home, Santa Caterina di Quarto. After the sisters had moved into their new nunnery, problems arose with the old one. In June 1322, some thirty-one years after its move, the “prior, *magistra*, *vicaria*, *procuratrix* and sisters” of the monastery of Santa Caterina e Santa Maria Maddelena petitioned Bishop Guido of Ferrara in his capacity as the subdelegate of Cardinal Bertrando to allow them to send

six or eight of the older sisters to the aforesaid monastery in order to keep continuous residence in the monastery of Santa Caterina di Quarto, which is the head and origin of our order . . . where lie the bodies of more than a thousand deceased.⁵³

The petition further stated that people living near the old church and monastery at Quarto were consuming and destroying the property belonging to that house.⁵⁴ Thus, they proposed to send several of their older sisters, who were presumably less in need of oversight than younger nuns, to maintain residence at their original house at which their order was founded, and to avert the depredation of the property around that older residence.

In the decree approving the petition, Guido of Ferrara referred to the petitioners as the sisters of “the monastery of Santa Maria Maddelena of Bologna, order of Saint Augustine . . . who were once of the monastery of Santa Caterina of Quarto of the said order, in the diocese of Bologna.”⁵⁵ Where the sisters had listed as the first reason

⁵³ “sex ut octo ex sororibus de antiquioribus monasterii prelibate ad faciendum continuam residentiam in monasterio sancte Catherine de Quarto quod fuit caput et principium ordinis ipsorum . . . apud quem sunt mille et ultra corpora defunctorum et defunctarum.” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 9/4493, no. 7.

⁵⁴ “destruunt et consumunt.” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 9/4493, no. 7.

⁵⁵ “monasterii sancte Marie Magdalene ordinis sancti Augustini . . . que ipse olim de monasterio sancte Catherine de Quarto dicti Ordinis bononiensis diocesis.” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 9/4493, no. 8.

for needing to maintain residence the fact that the house in Quarto had been the head and origin of their order, in granting the petition Guido did not acknowledge this fact; rather, he made a point of mentioning that Santa Caterina of Quarto was also part of the Augustinian Order. He concentrated on their need to protect the property in Quarto as his reason for granting their request. Unfortunately, this is the only information we have about the proposal to send nuns to occupy the monastery in Quarto Superiore, so it is impossible to tell how many sisters actually went there and how long they remained or precisely what properties or property rights were involved.

Once a nunnery moved from a rural house into the city, the inhabitants were often faced with financing the building of a new nunnery or the renovation of an old one that had been abandoned by its previous occupants. The building of the monastery and church could take forty years or more, as was the case with San Mattia. Sometimes the communities still held assets located at the site of the old nunnery and needed to find a way to protect those holdings now that the group no longer resided there. In addition to the economic interest in maintaining these properties, sometimes a nunnery's original location contained an element of the community's spiritual identity. San Mattia's connection to Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia gave it a special status as a nunnery directly protected by the pope. Santa Caterina's desire to repopulate its original house may represent not only the guarding of assets, but also an attempt to maintain its status as the head of its own order, though the bishop to whom they sent their petition rejected this rationale.

FLEEING WARS IN THE CONTADO

While communities that left their old houses in the thirteenth century to establish new nunneries in the city did so largely by choice, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries several groups moved because

wars threatened their safety and sometimes damaged their buildings beyond repair. In particularly destructive wars of this period, a relatively large number of nunneries found themselves in danger. During the fourteenth century, Bologna often waged war with neighboring cities such as Ferrara, and houses outside of the protection of the city walls suffered pillage. In some cases the destruction of nunneries led to the union of two houses. Sometimes a group could move into a building that had been abandoned by another monastic organization, though this situation could involve substantial renovation to the structure. In other cases, the sisters had to build new nunneries, putting further strain on the already meager resources of these convents. The communities financed these new buildings by selling land and possessions, including the materials from the destroyed monastery, and by gaining indulgences from popes and bishops by which those who contributed alms or labor would gain spiritual rewards.⁵⁶

Sometimes, the cost of building a new nunnery drove a nunnery into financial difficulty. In 1351, the Camaldolese nunnery of Sant'Anna, which was located outside the Porta Galliera to the north of the city, was destroyed in war. The nuns managed to build a new house in the city, in an area called Bagno Marino in the northern part of the city but inside the gates. The cost of the new building added to their economic difficulties and, in 1409, they were forced to abandon it as well. They attempted to raise revenue by renting out

⁵⁶ This process is similar to one followed by convents in other areas of Europe. For example, in Anne Lester's study of Cistercian nunneries in Champagne, she finds that communities of Cistercian nuns that had first settled outside of the city walls were forced to relocate into the city during the Hundred Years' War. In a slightly different circumstance, Sigrid Schmitt Hirbodian examines the effect that the construction of Strasbourg's new, expanded wall had on four Dominican nunneries, which had to be destroyed in the course of the wall's construction. The city provided substantial financial aid to relocate the nuns inside the new walls, though this involved the consolidation of the nuns into fewer convents. See Lester, *Creating Cistercian Nuns*, 205–7; Schmitt, "Geistliche Frauen," pp. 69–72.

their nunnery and staying in private houses, but soon the community died out. The Camaldolese Order took over the building and sold it in the 1430s to a confraternity.⁵⁷

Even the successful building of a new nunnery did not ensure that the community would be able to retain the house indefinitely. The Cistercian nunnery of Santa Maria del Cestello financed the purchase of their new house – possibly with favorable terms from the seller of the new house or the buyer of materials from the old one. In the fifteenth century, however, a larger community of nuns displaced them from this new house as well.

In 1354, the city of Bologna built a fortress very near to Santa Maria del Cestello. Fearing that the proximity to the fortress would make them subject to attacks of invading armies, the nuns decided to abandon their house and move to a new nunnery inside the city walls.⁵⁸ They bought a house with a large garden enclosure from the procurator of Giovanni Pepoli, son of the *signore* of Bologna, Taddeo Pepoli, for the sum of 1,700 lire.⁵⁹ To finance the purchase of their new house, they obtained permission from their superior, the abbot of Santa Maria di Columba, to demolish their old nunnery and sell the materials, although they did not want to sell the land on which it had stood. They commissioned Gabrele Brevi, a monk of the Cistercian monastery of Chiaravalle near Milan, and Rustigano Rustigani, a Bolognese notary, to act as their procurators.⁶⁰ They sold the wood, stone, concrete, and iron used to build the nunnery to Pietro Balbo for 2,100 lire.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 171.

⁵⁸ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 3/3245, not numbered, titled "Breve, et esatto ristretto dell'origine e fondatione del Venerabile Monasterio delle RR Monache di S. Leonardo dette di S. Orsola dell'Ordine Cisterciense delle Città di Bologna", fol. 1r.

⁵⁹ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 3/3245, not numbered, fols. 1r–1v.

⁶⁰ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 7/3249, no. 2.

⁶¹ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 7/3249, no. 7.

It is not clear whether Santa Maria del Cestello's original nunnery had been damaged by the war or whether they chose to move once the new fortress had been built near their nunnery. During this period of war on the Italian peninsula, other nunneries faced similar circumstances. Katherine Gill discusses the choice of the Roman nunnery of Santa Maria *prope Portium santi Petri* (sic) to move when papal soldiers set up camp in the vicinity once the pope had returned from Avignon. The nuns asked for permission to move in order to avoid "scandal." Gill argues that the modern sexual connotations of the word "scandal" do not convey the entire meaning of *scandalum* in the Middle Ages. She suggests that phrases such as "'public conflict,' or 'disruptive polarization of potential interest groups,' or even 'disturbance of the peace' would all be better translations than our tabloid tainted word 'scandal.'"⁶² She continues:

These women . . . were not thinking primarily of sexual scandal. They wanted to avoid the public violence which would ensue between their kinsmen and the papal soldiers if one of them should suffer insult or assault. Doubtless, they also wanted to reduce the possibility that any of their relatives might have reason to be in the vicinity . . . In the event of an incident, feminine honor would not have been the only issue in the hopper.⁶³

The examples of Santa Maria del Cestello and Santa Maria *prope Portium santi Petri* illustrate the factors that went into displacing a monastic community in wartime.

While Santa Maria del Cestello was able to find land in the city and finance the building of their new nunnery, they eventually moved from this house as well. Cestello's nearby neighbor, San Lorenzo — whose inhabitants themselves had been transferred to that location

⁶² Katherine Jane Gill, "Penitents, *Pinzochere* and *Mantellate*: Varieties of Women's Religious Communities in Central Italy, c. 1300–1500" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1994), 120.

⁶³ Gill, "Penitents," 121.

from a nunnery outside the city in the 1430s – successfully argued that San Lorenzo’s sixty nuns would put the large and relatively new convent to better use than the small community residing in Santa Maria del Cestello at the time; the nuns who originally lived in the house transferred to another community rather than unify with the house’s new inhabitants.⁶⁴

Finding a new location proved difficult, and sometimes a monastic community spent several years in private houses before they could find or construct a suitable enclosed building. This was the case with San Mattia and Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia. In 1357, their main nunnery, San Mattia, was damaged by the war. They did not immediately begin building a new convent; rather, they lived for nearly twenty years in some houses on the Via Sant’Isaia.⁶⁵ Few documents survive from this period, so it is difficult to reconstruct the conditions under which the nuns lived. Their prioress, Zana Gozzadini, died in August 1359, and the nuns elected Francesca Zanetti prioress in that same month, but she did not receive confirmation until October 4, 1360.⁶⁶ On that day, Francesca gave her oath to the abbot of San Felice, who was acting as a representative of the pope, “in the houses in which I live at present with the community of the aforesaid monasteries [San Mattia and Santa Maria del Monte della Guardia].”⁶⁷ Finally, in February 1374, Cardinal Pietro, the pope’s vicar general, gave them permission

⁶⁴ For more on the union of Santa Maria del Cestello and San Lorenzo, see Chapter 6, pp. 212–15.

⁶⁵ Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, 2: 299; Zarri, “Monasteri femminili,” 210.

⁶⁶ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 9/5770, not numbered, dated August 17, 1359. Another document on the election of an abbess was located in ASB Dem., San Mattia, 53/5814, no. 20, but is no longer present in that location. It was dated February 24, 1359. Regarding the confirmation, see ASB Dem., San Mattia, 9/5770, not numbered, dated October 5, 1360, and 53/5814, no. 21.

⁶⁷ “in domibus in quibus ad presens residio una cum conventu dictorum monasteriorum.” ASB Dem., San Mattia, 53/5814, no. 21.

to build an altar for celebrating the divine office.⁶⁸ In March 1376, another cardinal legate, Guglielmo, gave them permission to build a chapel with a bell tower, overriding the parish priest of Sant'Isaia, who had forbidden them to build a church. Guglielmo also bestowed an indulgence of forty days on anyone who visited the nunnery on Christmas, on the feast day commemorating the circumcision of Jesus, on Epiphany, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints, on the four feasts of the Virgin Mary, and on the feast day of S. Matthew.⁶⁹ In 1376, they moved into their new convent.⁷⁰

The deterioration of monasteries because of wars and age continued to cause great upheaval in Bolognese monastic communities in the fifteenth century. In 1428, the Augustinian sisters of Sant'Orsolina abandoned their monastery outside the walls of Bologna because they did not feel safe there because of the wars taking place between Bologna and neighboring towns.⁷¹ Instead, like San Mattia in the 1350s, they stayed in rented housing near San Giovanni in Monte, the primary monastery of Augustinian Hermits in Bologna, before uniting with the Augustinian nuns of San Lorenzo, located inside the Porta Castiglione, in 1431. The three nuns already living at San Lorenzo did not favor the union, and rather than remaining with their Augustinian sisters they decided to change their professions and move to the Cistercian house of Santa Maria del Cestello, just across the Via Castiglione from San Lorenzo.

The following year, Cardinal Fantino Dandoli, the apostolic legate to Bologna, moved the Cistercian nuns of Santa Maria della Misericordia from their location in the suburbs outside the Porta Castiglione into the house that had been abandoned by the sisters of Sant'Orsolina in order to give Santa Maria della Misericordia to

⁶⁸ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 10/5771, not numbered, dated February 14, 1374.

⁶⁹ ASB Dem., San Mattia, 10/5771, not numbered, dated March 16, 1374.

⁷⁰ Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, 2: 299. ⁷¹ ASB Dem., San Lorenzo, 9/3377, no. 16.

the Olivetan brothers of San Michele in Bosco, whose monastery had been destroyed in the wars.⁷² The sisters living in Sant'Orsolina sought and obtained financial aid from the brothers to repair the war-damaged convent to which they had been forced to move. In 1457, they enlisted the aid of their fellow Cistercian, the abbot of Santa Maria di Columba, to attempt to regain their old monastery from San Michele in Bosco, but they were unsuccessful, and remained at Sant'Orsolina. They came to be known by the name of their new convent.⁷³

The shuffling of nunneries in the first half of the fifteenth century led to competition for resources in the second half. Santa Maria del Cestello, the nuns from Santa Maria della Misericordia living in Sant'Orsolina, and those from Sant'Orsolina that were in San Lorenzo all engaged in controversies surrounding unions that resulted from jockeying for the best buildings to house their populations.⁷⁴

The upheaval continued into the early sixteenth century. In 1511, the first house of Poor Clares in Bologna, San Francesco, located just outside of the Porta Santo Stefano on the southeast side of the city, was destroyed in a war between Pope Julius II and the city of Bologna. The nuns were dispersed to live with their relatives and, in October 1512, they gained permission to take over the urban monastery of Santi Naborre e Felice, formerly a Camaldolese monastery suppressed by Julius II in 1506 and used as a hospital for plague victims for a couple of years afterward.⁷⁵ After the nuns moved to their new house, the community of San Francesco came to be known as Santi Naborre e Felice.

⁷² ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 3/3245, no. 2.

⁷³ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 3/3245, no. 6.

⁷⁴ See Chapter 6, pp. 211–15.

⁷⁵ Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, 1: 30; Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 183.

CONCLUSIONS

Though these moves could be disruptive and unsettling, the nunneries that found urban houses were the lucky ones. While twelve communities of women religious existed in the suburbs and the rural areas of the diocese in 1400, by 1450 this number had decreased to four. As far as can be ascertained, six of these did not move into the relative safety of the city, but rather disappeared from the record.⁷⁶

The nunneries that moved from the rural areas around Bologna to the city and suburbs during the thirteenth century did so during a time of expansion in the number of monastic houses that corresponded with the growth of the city itself. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, those nunneries that were outside the city walls or even inside the city where the walls were not yet complete found themselves in danger because of the wars between cities. These nunneries chose to move to avoid danger or were forced to relocate because of the destruction of their houses. By this time, the absorption of additional monastic communities into the city was more difficult, leading to competition for scarce resources and more disruption of the lives of women religious. Thus, nunneries became geographically restricted to the periphery of the urban area, with a few remaining outside the gates in the suburbs.

At the same time, these moves toward and into the city were accompanied by changes in the mobility of religious women. The location in and near the city offered the nuns some protection, but could also subject them to greater scrutiny. The papal decree *Periculoso* and similar decrees on the diocesan level articulated strict

⁷⁶ These communities were S. Antonio di Medicina, Santa Maria di Biliemme, SS. Maria di Pontemaggiore, Santa Maria Maddelena delle Convertite, S. Marta fuori Porta Mamolo, and SS. Filippo, Giacomo e Elisabetta delle Santuccie. See Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 170–1, 181, 192, 204–5, 209.

enclosure for nuns as an ideal in stronger terms than had previously been expressed. The case of Santa Caterina is illustrative of this process. As a double house in the countryside, religious women in the community were allowed the same mobility as their brethren. With their relocation into the city and the change from double house to nunnery, and from protection of a far-away pope to the jurisdiction of a nearby bishop, the changes in Santa Caterina's statutes in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries demonstrate increased scrutiny on the lives of religious women.

Peaceful unions and “hostile takeovers”

Though the monastic ideal was that a religious woman would spend her life following the rule she had professed in the monastery she entered as a novice, it was not uncommon for a significant element of a woman’s monastic profession to change at some point in her life.¹ As we have seen in Chapter 5, monastic communities might change location, either to move closer to the burgeoning city center or because their old monastery was no longer safe. In these circumstances, entire communities relocated – though their physical location may have changed, other elements of convent life such as rule, order, and personnel of the monastery remained constant.

In other cases in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, upheavals in convent life led not only to a change in location but also to the combining of multiple communities into a single monastery, which could require some of these religious women to change their rule and order, along with adjusting to life with new sisters, in a new location and with a new patron saint. As with relocations of entire communities, these events could occur because of natural disasters, warfare in the vicinity of the convent, or the deterioration of the buildings that housed the community. At times, religious women

¹ Portions of this chapter appear in my article, “Negotiated Unions and Hostile Takeovers: Studying Religious Women’s Choices in Late Medieval Italy,” *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 44.2 (2013): 267–92.

could also find themselves to be the objects of attempts at reform of their communities. In these cases, nuns from outside of the convent could be transferred into a monastic house and given authority over their new community, sometimes over the strenuous objection of the nuns who were to be reformed. These reforms could bring significant change to the character of a community, even leading to changes in rule and order.

In this chapter, I shall examine cases in which groups of religious women transferred from one nunnery to another, including the merging of two or more communities into one house. Many of these unions or transfers were forced by hardship of some sort and thus cannot be considered entirely voluntary. Nevertheless, the varying circumstances and outcomes of these events provide opportunity to examine the choices religious women made to secure the most acceptable lives for themselves, even when they were choosing among undesirable options. In some cases, unions resulted from negotiations between monastic houses, while others happened over the strenuous objections of one of the parties. Church officials such as cardinals and bishops approved or facilitated these unions, and ruled on the resolutions of conflicts that arose in the wake of many of these unions and transfers. In the vast majority of cases, monks, friars, and canons sharing a rule or order with these women's communities were not involved in resolving the crisis.

For many houses of nuns, ecclesiastical correspondence regarding unions and transfers provides an important opportunity to examine how both religious women and church officials conceived of these communities and their place in the church. Though sources such as convent chronicles and devotional writing produced by the nuns themselves would be ideal sources for learning about the lives of religious women, such records are rare. In the absence of these kinds of sources, historians can learn much about the priorities of

religious women from documents that record the actions of nuns at these pivotal points in their communities' histories and reflect the arguments they made to church officials whose decisions would have substantial impact on their lives. Such events – and the records that clerical officials produced in the course of marking the changes that accompanied them and the disputes that sometimes arose from them – can allow those who study religious women's lives to understand whether nuns saw their convents primarily as being marked by the observance of a certain rule, affiliation with a particular order, or as individual communities that might change rule, order, and location to continue in their way of life. Similarly, the way that ecclesiastical officials such as popes, legates, and bishops managed these crises in religious women's communities provides insight into their own ideas about how to manage women's monastic communities. Though all the cases examined in this study are drawn from one city and thus are embedded in their local context, the popes and cardinals (and their operatives in the curial offices that produced these documents) who oversaw these events had a broader purview. Thus, the decisions that they made – and the choices they allowed nuns to make – reflect ideas about women's monasticism that transcend these local examples.

In a union, the property of two religious communities is combined. This merging of property could also be accompanied by the combining of two groups of nuns into a single house, though this was not always the case.² When some or all nuns from one house moved physically to another monastery without bringing the property from their former convent with them on a permanent basis, this is usually not referred to as a union, but rather tends to be described

² For example, the papal governor of Bologna, Cardinal Legate Bertrand de Pouget, ordered the union of convents' properties with collegiate churches, while transferring the inhabitants of these convents to other religious women's communities. See Chapter 4, pp. 157–64.

as a transfer of nuns from one house to another. In the vast majority of cases, the communities did not merge peacefully, whether or not they had historically followed the same rule and worn the same habit. Thus, while church officials were primarily focused on disposing of monastic property and ensuring that religious women could continue the monastic life in some manner, the actions of the nuns themselves suggest that they resisted unions imposed on them, often leaving the newly merged community to find a more acceptable situation for themselves by transferring en masse to another monastery of their own choosing.

I shall focus on two convents that, faced with a damaged or deteriorating monastery, negotiated unions with stronger communities, and two convents that took a more aggressive approach to securing the housing they felt they needed in order to continue the religious life. These latter groups initiated unions over the objections of the other nuns with whom they proposed to join in a single community. Though in some cases nuns or church officials specified that two merging houses followed the same rule or wore the same habit as part of the rationale for the union of those particular houses, unions across orders were not uncommon. Finally, I shall examine the activities of one convent that initiated attempts to reform several other houses of various rules and orders in Bologna. These reforms involved the transfer of personnel from one community to another, sometimes requiring individual nuns or entire convents to change their profession.

These events provide an opportunity for scholars to see, even within admittedly limited choices available to these women, what they were able to negotiate and what they were not willing to abide. It seems that for many houses of religious women, monastic identity was significantly centered in their community rather than in their rule or order. When combining with another group was

necessary to the continuation of monastic life, unions within the same order do not seem to have been more successful than unions across orders – negotiated unions across orders could endure, and unions within the same order without the consent of both parties could fail. From the point of view of ecclesiastical officials presiding over these events, unions across orders might need to be explained in terms of the desire to observe a more austere rule, though this was not always necessary. They, too, seemed to see women's monasteries as individual communities first and adherents to particular rules and orders second. Whereas for these officials, unions seemed to be primarily about management of property, in these events religious women had to make decisions about what would best allow them to continue their religious lives despite catastrophe and displacement.

NEGOTIATED UNIONS

The case of the union of San Nicolò di Campo del Mercato and San Guglielmo provides an example of a negotiated union that endured, despite the fact that the two communities were observing different rules at the time of the union. In 1322, the Aposa River flooded its banks and destroyed the nunnery of San Nicolò di Campo del Mercato. San Nicolò had been founded in 1264 as a Benedictine nunnery located just outside the walls on the eastern side of the city, and in this location it had been known as San Nicolò di Carpineta. In the late thirteenth century, the community left its original house to move inside the city, near the Campo del Mercato.³ Then, in the early fourteenth century, the nuns of San Nicolò, at the time comprised of ten inhabitants, changed their observance to the Augustinian Rule instead of continuing to follow the Rule of Saint Benedict, as three

³ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 212 n. 246.

separate documents from December 1317 attest.⁴ The surviving records from this period are all property transactions, which only rarely include any mention of the rule a community followed or a description of its order. In these kinds of sources, the name of the monastic community is usually sufficient for the purpose of the sale or lease, though the name of the prioress or proctor may be included as well. Beyond the occasional mention of the rule or order of a particular house, additional information about the devotional life of the community would be outside the scope of this kind of document. Thus, it is not possible to use such documents to determine whether the change in rule was the product of the nuns’ own choice or was imposed on them by a church official.

After the destruction of their monastery, the sisters of San Nicolò united with another nunnery, San Guglielmo, which followed the Benedictine Rule and the constitution of the Cistercians. Both convents were in the northwest quadrant of the city, and so the desire to stay in the same neighborhood may have played a role in the decision of these two convents to unite, though this fact is never mentioned in any correspondence.⁵ Pope John XXII’s bull ordering the union provides evidence for the process by which the inhabitants of San Nicolò and those of San Guglielmo reached an agreement to unite. The bull relates the findings of the Bolognese bishop’s vicar general, Ruggiero Caccia, before whom the proctors of both communities appeared to present their proposal. San Nicolò’s proctor, Ugolino de Ottobono, presented a petition stating that “the prioress, sisters, and convent desire to transfer themselves to the Rule of Saint Benedict, so that leading that more austere life, they might humbly serve Christ,

⁴ ASB Dem., San Guglielmo, 1/735, nos. 21–3.

⁵ Gabriella Zarri locates San Guglielmo at the site of the current Via Mascarella 75, and San Nicolò di Campo del Mercato near Via Capo di Lucca, very near the Borgo Mascarella. Zarri, “Monasteri femminili,” 186 and 212.

their heavenly husband.”⁶ They asked to be allowed to leave their nunnery and to move to San Guglielmo, along with their goods, and proposed to tear down their old church and monastery in order to add these building materials to the holdings of their new nunnery. Brandano, the proctor for San Guglielmo, expressed the abbess’s intention to accept the sisters from San Nicolò and to receive their professions of the Benedictine Rule.

It is notable that there is no mention that San Nicolò had at one point followed the Rule of Saint Benedict, nor is there any language suggesting that the destruction of the nunnery might be punishment for the change from the Benedictine to the Augustinian Rule, thus prompting their return to the observance of their original rule as members of another community. While the conversion of the sisters of San Nicolò to the Rule of Saint Benedict that accompanied the union with San Guglielmo is justified as a change to a stricter rule, the idea that the Augustinian Rule is less rigorous had not been an impediment to San Nicolò’s change from Benedictine to Augustinian earlier in the century.

Though it is impossible to know what went on before this meeting with the vicar general, the circumstances suggest that the nunneries, via their proctors, worked out the outlines of the agreement in advance of their appearance before the vicar general. The records of San Guglielmo do not indicate conflict among the members of the new combined community in the aftermath of the union, suggesting that the union was successful and that in this case the expectations of both parties were reasonably met.

However, even unions that seemed initially to have the consent of both parties could fail. In 1381, the cardinal legate in Bologna,

⁶ “Priorissa sorores et conventus cupiant ad beati benedicti regulam se tranferre ut in ipsam austeriorem vitam ducentes et Christo ipsarum celesti sponso humiliter famulantes.” ASB Dem., San Guglielmo, 1/735, no. 34.

Filippo Caraffa, presided over the union of an Augustinian convent, Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore, with the Benedictine nunnery of Santi Gervasio e Protasio.⁷ The record of the union reflects a petition of the prioress and sisters of Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore, in which the sisters recounted that their community was in great need and that they could no longer live in their current house. They had reached this current state, they said, because of "the mortality of the plague and the evil of the times."⁸ The nuns confessed that they were in debt, and that they had tried over a long period of time to remedy their financial situation. The qualities that recommended Santi Gervasio e Protasio to the nuns of Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore included not only their virtue, but also their wealth: in the document recording the union, the sisters of Santa Maria praised the nunnery with which they were to unite for "the industry of its circumspection, the providence of its honor, and the affluence of its arable fields."⁹ In this case, neither the representative of Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore nor the legate who approved the union made any argument that the change in rule was justified because the sisters of Santa Maria were moving to a stricter rule. As a result of the union, prioress and sisters of Santa Maria "transferred from the said Order of Saint Augustine to the Order of Saint Benedict."¹⁰

The arrangement that the nuns of Santa Maria were seeking in their union with a wealthier house was one in which the two communities

⁷ Filippo Caraffa was a Neapolitan noble who served as archdeacon of the cathedral chapter of Bologna and as Cardinal Priest of San Martino in Monte in Rome under Pope Urban VI. Konrad Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 4 vols. (Munster: Libreriae Regensbergiana, 1913), 1: 22; Ferdinando Ughelli, *Italia Sacra*, 10 vols. (Nedeln, Lichtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1970), 2: col. 27.

⁸ "mortalitatem pestis et temporis maliciam." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 13/4497, no. 15, fol. 1r.

⁹ "circumspexionis induxtriam, honestatis providenciam et affluenciam arratatis." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 13/4497, no. 15, fol. 1v.

¹⁰ "transtulit [sic] de dicto ordine Sancti Augustini ad Sancti Benedicti ordinem." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 13/4497, n. 15, fol. 2v.

would not unite under one roof, although because of the state of their nunnery it may have been necessary for them to move temporarily, but rather one in which Santa Maria would become a daughter house, and in which their mother house would undertake the reform and restoration of their convent. In return, the building, such as it was, and whatever property the community held would henceforth belong to Santi Gervasio e Protasio.

Subsequent events suggest that the two parties may have had different expectations about what the union would entail, or that Santi Gervasio e Protasio did not uphold its end of the bargain. The dissolution of the union in 1413 and the petition that led to it lend support to this interpretation. In 1413, the two surviving sisters of Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore petitioned Pope John XXIII to dissolve their union with Santi Gervasio e Protasio and unify them instead with a Camaldolese nunnery, Santa Cristina della Fondazza. A bull from the pope directs the prior of San Gregorio, a house of Augustinian canons near Bologna, to oversee the progress of the dissolution and union. The bull reflects Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore's petition, in which the sisters narrate their history. They recounted that they were placed under the authority of the abbess of Santi Gervasio e Protasio, who held Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore but did not exercise care for it or give the help they needed. The two surviving nuns in that house then requested that the union with Santi Gervasio e Protasio should be dissolved and that they would become Camaldolese and unify with Santa Cristina, bringing the possessions of their nunnery with them.¹¹

The situation of Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore illustrates the difficulty posed by the union of two nunneries into one community. In this case, the nuns of Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore were forced to

¹¹ Mittarelli and Costadoni, *Annales Camaldulenses*, 5: cols. 705–6.

seek help from another house, submitting themselves to the authority of another abbess and changing the rule that they followed. The surviving nuns from Santa Maria retained their institutional identity for over thirty years, and sought to bring the property that came with them into the union with Santi Gervasio e Protasio to their new union with Santa Cristina. They displayed a willingness to change their rule and order to establish a satisfactory living arrangement. Moreover, the officials who presided over these unions did not object to changes in observance, either in the case of Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore or in that of San Nicolò.

CONTESTED UNIONS

In the negotiated unions of San Nicolò with San Guglielmo and Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore with San Gervasio and Santa Cristina, communities of religious women with smaller numbers and weaker standing endeavored to survive by uniting with larger, more stable communities. In other cases, a community whose monastery was deteriorating or otherwise insufficient to its needs could still be the stronger party in a monastic union because of the size of its population. The numerical superiority was augmented by arguments about the need for reform of the communities with which the convent initiating the union hoped to unite. Two communities – Sant’Orsolina and Santa Caterina – were the driving force in a series of unions in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. When damages of factional war forced the Augustinian convent of Sant’Orsolina to seek other housing, they spent three years in temporary housing, and then were united with another Augustinian house, San Lorenzo. Citing increased numbers after forty years in that location, they petitioned the pope for permission to absorb another nearby monastery into their holdings to accommodate their large population.

The fifteenth century in Bologna was an era of political turmoil, with violent disputes between local families vying for dominance, with the Bentivoglio family emerging as local despots and consolidating their power in the second half of the century. The Bentivoglio in turn fought with the papacy, which at times moved to impose their own governors on the second city of the Papal States, and in other circumstances allowed members of the Bentivoglio family to rule on their behalf.

In the fifteenth century, some communities of religious women, no longer able to stay in the buildings that had been their homes, sought to rectify this problem by petitioning to unite with other convents without engaging in negotiations with the members of those houses. In three cases, more populous communities of nuns identified convents that were spacious enough to house their large numbers but were inhabited by small groups of nuns. These convents were located within the city walls, providing better protection for their inhabitants than the suburban convents that these communities were fleeing.

SAN LORENZO AND SANT'ORSOLINA

In November 1428, the Augustinian sisters of Sant'Orsolina abandoned their war-damaged nunnery just outside the eastern wall of Bologna. Seeking safety inside the city walls, they moved into the house of Tommaso Cecca, near the Augustinian monastery of San Giovanni in Monte. The following year, they received a bequest from a wealthy widow named Lucrezia Salicetti, intended to help them secure more permanent housing in the city.¹² Perhaps the bequest was not sufficient to allow them to build a new nunnery; in 1431, Bishop Niccolò Albergati united them with another

¹² Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, 1: 276–7.

Augustinian nunnery, San Lorenzo. Twenty-four nuns from Sant'Orsolina moved into San Lorenzo, in which three nuns resided.

Despite the fact that they observed the same rule, the union did not go smoothly. The nuns of San Lorenzo fought the union, denying that it was legitimate, since they did not consent to it. When a series of ecclesiastical officials upheld the union, the three nuns of San Lorenzo decided to transfer across the street to the Cistercian nunnery of Santa Maria del Cestello.¹³ This move was approved by the legate Fantino Dandoli, at the time serving as papal governor of the city, who cast the transfer as acceptable since the former-Augustinian nuns joined a convent with a stricter rule.¹⁴ Over the next five years, debates over property and the financial support of the transferred nuns continued, concluding with an agreement in 1438 that the sisters of Sant'Orsolina, now living in San Lorenzo, would get possession of all of San Lorenzo's properties in the parish of San Lucia, in which the convent was located. Other holdings, however, would support the nuns leaving San Lorenzo. This situation would hold for the duration of these nuns' lives, after which the property would revert to San Lorenzo.¹⁵ San Lorenzo's desire to retrieve these properties in the 1470s may have been a precipitating cause of the conflict between these two nunneries that resulted in San Lorenzo gaining control of its Cistercian neighbor's domicile.

SAN LORENZO AND SANTA MARIA DEL CESTELLO

By 1473, the Augustinian nuns of Sant'Orsolina living in San Lorenzo had increased in number to sixty women. What had seemed to them

¹³ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 188–9.

¹⁴ ASB Dem., San Lorenzo, 9/3377, no. 25. "Priorissa et conventus sancti Laurentii non sunt eidem ordinis et regule cum dicto monasterio cisterciensi. Attento quod procedat de voluntate dictarum presentium et attento maxime quod ad artiore transeunt regulam superscriptam et aliis in contrarium fructibus non obstantibus quibuscumque."

¹⁵ ASB Dem., San Lorenzo, 10/3378, no. 15.

to be a comfortable monastery forty years earlier had become too crowded. They looked across the street to Santa Maria del Cestello – which at the time housed only eight professed nuns – and saw a potential solution to their problem.

On July 1, 1473, Pope Sixtus IV wrote to the bishop of Bologna regarding the situation of the nuns of San Lorenzo. His knowledge of San Lorenzo's plight was based on a petition from the nuns themselves.¹⁶ The nunnery of San Lorenzo, he stated, held sixty nuns who led honorable lives, but who were reduced to begging and manual labor for their survival. There was, however, a nunnery across the street that contained only an abbess and seven nuns:

There exists the monastery of the Blessed Maria del Cestello . . . of the Order of Citeaux, which is located across from the Monastery of San Lorenzo, such that between them there is only an average-sized street, having a great and ample space in which are living an abbess and about seven nuns. Their professions completely forgotten and their chastity and religion completely neglected, they lead a shameless and dishonest life.¹⁷

The nuns of San Lorenzo asked that they be allowed to join the buildings by means of an underground tunnel, so that they could go back and forth between the two houses without having to leave the cloister. They also asked that the office of abbess at Santa Maria del Cestello be suppressed.¹⁸

On September 11 of that year, the bishop's vicar held an inquiry into the matter. A proctor represented each nunnery – Constantino

¹⁶ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 7/3249, no. 15.

¹⁷ "Monasterium Beate Marie de cistello Bononiensis ordinis Cisterciensis quod ex opposito dicti Monasterii Sancti Laurentii situatum existit, itaque inter illa non est nisi strata media magnum et amplum locum habens in quo Abbatisa et septem Moniales aut circha inhabitantes sue professionis penitus immemores ac regulari castimonia et religione penitus neglecta vitam impudicam et inhonestam ducunt." ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 3/3245, no. 8, fol. 1r.

¹⁸ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 7/3249, no. 16.

de Serafino for the nuns of San Lorenzo and Gratiano di Grasso for Santa Maria del Cestello.¹⁹ Gratiano objected to the union, although the grounds on which he did so are not spelled out in the record. His efforts to stop the union failed, and the convent of Santa Maria del Cestello was suppressed. The sisters were given the option of staying in the nunnery and accepting the Rule of Saint Augustine or transferring to another nunnery of their own order; they chose the latter, and went to the nunnery of Sant’Orsolina, now inhabited by Cistercian nuns who had formerly lived in the nunnery of Santa Maria della Misericordia until they were forced out by the monks of San Michele in Bosco. All movable and immovable goods belonging to Santa Maria del Cestello were also transferred to Sant’Orsolina, with the exception of the building itself and its enclosure.²⁰

The case was not settled at this point. In October 1473, the abbess of Sant’Orsolina petitioned the pope to settle the question of how the property would be disposed of in the event of that the former abbess and nuns of Santa Maria del Cestello should either die or leave Sant’Orsolina. The possibility remained that the former inhabitants

¹⁹ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 3/3245, n. 8, fol. 3r. The nuns in San Lorenzo are “Soror Bartholoema de Pontremulo, Soror Constantia de Mutina priorissa sororum dicti monasterii, Soror Margarita de Monte Floreno, Soror Lucia de Zanetinis, Soror Catherina de Paliottis, Soror Ursolina de Musottis, Soror Margarita de Bonittio, Soror Thomasia de Caxale, Soror Jacoba de Caxale, Soror Ursolina de Mutina, Soror Floriana de Ursis, Soror Francisca de Aldrovandis, Soror Clara de Taconibus, Soror Silvestra de Azaris, Soror Domicilla de Malchiavellis, Soror Cecilia de Ghisileriis, Soror Paula de Ghisileriis, Soror Damiana de Mutina, Soror Benedicts de Regio, Soror Augustina de Ludonisiis, Soror Dorothea de Banchis sive de Danciis, Soror Hieronyma de Mongardino, Soror Isabetta de Chazanimitis, Soror Johana del Tintore, Soror Eufroxinia de Guidottis, Soror Marta de Mutina, Soror Ludovica de Mutina, Soror Veronica de Bononia, Soror Placida de Troxatis, Soror Nicola de Verona, Soror Seraphina de Ghiero, Soror Luchretia de Ottofredis, Soror Alexandra de Sancto Johanne, Soror Philippa de Crevalcorio, Soror Betisia de Arabonia, Soror Cherubina de Rustignanis, Soror Angela de Busellis, Soror Antonia de Florentia, Soror Helena de [unreadable], Soror Illuminata de Plactellis, Soror Agatha de Saragliano, Soror Gabriella de Ghero, Soror Vincentia de Zambecharis, Soror Thadea de Scarduinis, Soror Magdalena de Tedrisiis, Soror Andrea de Guidottis, Soror Eufraxia de Clarinis.”

²⁰ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 3/3245, no. 8.

of Santa Maria del Cestello only had usufruct of the mobile and immobile goods from their old monastery, and that that property would return to the patrimony of San Lorenzo after the deaths of the nuns who had once lived at Santa Maria del Cestello. Another uncertainty was whether the goods would follow those nuns if they decided to leave Sant'Orsolina, as the sisters of Santa Maria di Pontemaggiore had left Santi Gervasio e Protasio. The abbess of Sant'Orsolina stated that theirs was the only remaining Cistercian nunnery in the diocese of Bologna. Sixtus IV instructed the canon lawyer Girolamo di Grasso to investigate the matter and render a judgment.²¹ On December 9, Girolamo decided in favor of Sant'Orsolina, consolidating the remaining holdings of Santa Maria del Cestello with those of Sant'Orsolina. This incorporation of goods would remain valid beyond the tenure of the nuns who had formerly lived in Santa Maria di Cestello at Sant'Orsolina, for whatever reason that tenure should come to an end, whether "by dying naturally, or by leaving the Monastery of the Virgins [Sant'Orsolina], or by going elsewhere."²²

SANTA CATERINA DI QUARTO AND SAN GIOVANNI
BATTISTA

The argument that the nuns of San Lorenzo made to justify their request for the union with Santa Maria del Cestello closely echoes the strategy employed by a Dominican convent across town, Santa Caterina. On December 6, 1468, the papal legate Giovanni Battista Savelli, who was also governor of Bologna, ordered the union of two nunneries, Santa Caterina e Santa Maria Maddalena and San

²¹ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 3/3245, no. 9.

²² "naturaliter decedentibus, aut dictum Monasterium de Virginibus exeuntibus, aut alias vagantibus." ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 3/3245, no. 10.

Giovanni Battista. The nuns of Santa Caterina had sent a petition saying that the eighteen professed nuns currently at the house, along with other sisters who served the nuns, exceeded the capacity of the house. Furthermore they argued that the age and ruined condition of the house made it difficult to maintain enclosure, since the house was practically open to the world, and that they did not have the resources to repair or to expand their abode sufficiently. They claimed that unless they were able to find a suitable place to live, they might have to abandon their religious life.²³

The sisters of Santa Caterina did, however, have another solution to propose. Their petition pointed out that another nunnery, San Giovanni Battista, in the parish of Sant'Isaia, of the same order and habit as Santa Caterina, was nearly depopulated and was large enough and in a suitable condition to accommodate their numbers. San Giovanni Battista was home to only a prioress and two sisters, along with, the petitioners claimed, several others who were not of the same order but were allowed to live in the nunnery without the permission of the bishop. Moreover, the nuns of Santa Caterina asserted that:

The prioress and sisters living in the said monastery of San Giovanni Battista lead a life of dishonesty and lasciviousness, entirely contrary to religion, so that it would be more holy and much more worthy of religion that the sisters living in the monastery of Santa Maria Maddalena should stay in the aforesaid monastery of San Giovanni Battista which is sufficiently large, ample and spacious.²⁴

²³ "propter eius vetustatem in ruinam colabi videatur ac etiam inter secularium domos fere anexum et contiguum existat . . . Undeque Religioni cui dedicate sunt laudabiliter pro ut deceret insistere non possunt et nisi eisdem Priorisse et sororibus de aliquo congruo et idoneo Monasterio pro earum habitatione provideatur proculdubio neccessitant Monasterium illud deserere et penitus de relinquere ingrande dedecus dicte religionis." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 17/4501, no. 21.

²⁴ "Priorissa et sorores in dicto Monasterio sancti Johannis Baptiste ressidentes [sic] vitam potius lasciviam et inhonestam et religioni penitus contratriam ducant adeo quod sanctius

The papal legate Giovanni Battista Savelli ordered the sisters of Santa Caterina to be transferred to San Giovanni Battista.

To tie up loose ends, he also dissolved the union that was then in effect between Santa Caterina and the parish church of Santa Maria Maddalena. Santa Caterina had been unified in 1291 with the parish church of Santa Maria Maddalena, which was at the time without a priest. As part of the condition of the union, Santa Caterina was required to support a cleric, who would serve both as parish priest and as the chaplain and prior of the nunnery. This union had been carried out by the bishop with the consent of the archpriest and the cathedral chapter. The dissolution of the union required a division of property. Santa Caterina was to relinquish the mobile and immobile goods belonging to the parish church, being sure that the resulting patrimony was sufficient to sustain the parish priest and one cleric comfortably.²⁵

The sisters of San Giovanni Battista did not support the union. A letter of December 22, 1468 registers their protest. Led by their prioress, Margarita de Monzono, the sisters of San Giovanni Battista claimed that the union was null and void because they did not consent to it and that the order for the union was based on falsehood. They claimed that Santa Caterina's monastery at Santa Maria Maddalena was indeed sufficient to the population of that nunnery. Trouble arose as well over the office of prioress. Margarita protested that the union would cause her to be deprived of the position that she had held at San Giovanni Battista and that she had no intention of stepping down as prioress.²⁶ The judgment in the case did not go

sit et plurimum religioni condignum ut sorores ipse in Monasterio Sancte Marie Magdalene degentes in Monasterio prelibato sancti Johannis Baptiste quod satis latum amplum et capax existit." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 17/4501, no. 21.

²⁵ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 17/4501, no. 21.

²⁶ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 17/4501, no. 22, fols. 1v–1r.

in Margarita's favor. Margarita and the two sisters who had been part of San Giovanni Battista before the union left the nunnery. They were given the usufruct of a fourteen-tornature piece of land. Margarita also was able to bring some mobile goods with her to her new nunnery, as well as some livestock.²⁷ The agreement was approved by the prioress, Helena de Gandulphis, along with eleven other nuns who had moved from Santa Caterina and Santa Maria Maddalena to San Giovanni Battista.²⁸

Though the document delineating the division of property does not indicate to what nunnery Margarita and the other nuns of San Giovanni Battista transferred, records of a dispute in another nunnery answer the question. In 1474, Sister Veronica Paganelli, a nun from the Dominican convent of San Pietro Martire, requested permission to transfer to another nunnery, Santa Maria Nuova, because she felt that there was too much turmoil in her current nunnery. One of the issues in her complaint was the number of lawsuits against other nunneries, one of which was San Giovanni Battista. Margarita di Monzano and another nun of the same last name, Antonia, were among the inhabitants of San Pietro Martire. Thus, the repercussions of the enmity created by the union were felt even in nunneries that were not party to it.

In the unions of San Lorenzo with Santa Maria del Cestello and of Santa Caterina with San Giovanni Battista, the nuns who initiated the union made a similar argument – that good nuns were in danger of not being able to fulfill their vows because of the poor condition

²⁷ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 17/4501, no. 22, fol. 3r.

²⁸ In addition to the prioress, the other nuns agreeing to the settlement were “Soror Margarita Boratii, Soror Bartolomea de Rosellis, Soror Clara magistri Antonii Medici, Soror Christina de Parma, Soror Madalena de Caleina, Soror Lutia et Soror Benedita de Bancis, Soror Caterina de Perusis, Soror Antonia de Ranutiis, Soror Margarita de Sancto Petro, Soror Cecilia filia ser Christofori de Bellabus [illegible] et Soror Agata de Auro.” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 17/4501, no. 22, fol. 2v.

of their physical surroundings, and that it would be a better use of newer, more spacious nunneries for these virtuous nuns to live there than the current inhabitants, who are charged with neglecting their vows. One question that arises from these two late fifteenth-century unions is whether the two components of the petitions – the need of the larger communities for better and larger housing and the allegations of unfitness directed at the smaller communities – can be taken separately or if the combination of the two explains the success of the petitioners in these cases.

It was not uncommon for allegations of unchastity, lax observance of vows, and poor stewardship of property to be leveled against nuns in the Middle Ages, particularly when property was at issue.²⁹ In making allegations of moral laxity against other nuns, the leaders of these convents were drawing on a cliché regarding the life of nuns. The image of the immoral nun was familiar from both religious and worldly literature.³⁰ The idea of widespread immorality of nuns contrasts with the findings of scholars who have questioned how often there is clear evidence of immoral behavior, particularly the breaking of the vow of chastity. For example, Trevor Dean finds six cases in Bologna of prosecutions for fornication with nuns between 1396 and 1432.³¹ Over the 300 years of her study of Strasbourg, Sigrid Schmitt finds only 9 such cases.³² These studies suggest that we must at least be suspicious of the image presented in medieval sources – both ecclesiastical and literary – of allegations of moral laxity.

In these Bolognese cases, there is no evidence that the nuns accused of lascivious behavior and otherwise neglected vows received any

²⁹ Berman, “The Labors of Hercules,” 43–5.

³⁰ See Graciela S. Daichman, *Wayward Nuns in Medieval Literature* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

³¹ Trevor Dean, “Fornicating with Nuns in Fifteenth Century Bologna,” *Journal of Medieval History* 34 (2008): 381.

³² Schmitt, “Geistliche Frauen,” 300.

censure. They were allowed either to remain in their old nunnery with the new inhabitants or to transfer to the nunnery of their choice. Though there appears to have been some trouble in the house to which the sisters from San Giovanni Battista transferred, causing at least one nun there to seek a more peaceful nunnery, tension among nuns and litigious behavior do not confirm that Sister Margarita and her companions were guilty of the charges that the nuns of Santa Caterina leveled against them. Where Santa Maria del Cestello was concerned, the only evidence of the nuns' behavior in the fifteenth century comes from a 1429 visitation by the abbot of Santa Maria della Columba, in which his main admonitions were that the nuns should remain quiet and should not talk at the window.³³ In 1445, the abbot of Santa Maria della Columba transferred Orsina Bentivoglio from Santa Maria del Cestello to the Cistercian community at Sant'Orsolina, installing her as its abbess. The nuns of Sant'Orsolina had elected an abbess without the approval of their superior.³⁴ In this case, Cistercian officials chose a nun from Santa Maria del Cestello to lead a house that had acted against the wishes of its superiors. Though it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from these events, especially in light of their chronological distance from the 1473 union, they do not support the portrayal of Santa Maria del Cestello as a nunnery in moral disorder.

The unions of the Augustinian community of Sant'Orsolina with San Lorenzo and then with Santa Maria del Cestello, added to the union of Santa Caterina with San Giovanni Battista, provide considerable insight into the conception religious women had of their own communities and the manner in which clerical officials looked at houses of nuns. In only one of these three cases were the unions

³³ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 4/3246, no. 1.

³⁴ ASB Dem., Santi Leonardo e Orsola, 4/3246, nos. 2–4.

and subsequent transfers all carried out among houses in the same order. Santa Caterina, a Dominican house, petitioned for union with San Giovanni Battista, which was also Dominican. The sharing of an order and habit did not, however, lead to a peaceful union – the three women in San Giovanni Battista chose to transfer to another house of their own choosing, rather than continue to live in their old nunnery, now under the control of the more numerous sisters of Santa Caterina.

The union of Sant'Orsolina with San Lorenzo in 1431 joined two Augustinian communities. Once again, the shared rule did not provide a unity of purpose, and the inhabitants of San Lorenzo chose to transfer to a nearby Cistercian convent rather than to remain with their Augustinian sisters, preferring to change rule and habit. With the proximity of San Lorenzo and Santa Maria del Cestello, it is possible that the sisters of these two communities had some familiarity with one another, making combining the two communities more acceptable to the nuns in San Lorenzo than a union with unfamiliar religious women who shared their rule. The official who oversaw the union, an apostolic protonotary named Fantino Dandoli, justified the transfer as a move to a house with a more rigorous rule.

The final union between the Augustinian nuns of Sant'Orsolina living in San Lorenzo and the Cistercian convent of Santa Maria del Cestello demonstrates that ecclesiastical officials were willing to approve requests for the joining of two communities of different orders. Though other unions or transfers across orders (generally Augustinian to Benedictine) had been accepted with the explanation that the nuns involved were changing to a more rigorous rule, in this case the fact that the union would require a change in rule on the part of some of the nuns was presented in a matter-of-fact way. The Cistercians of Santa Maria del Cestello were given the choice

of remaining in their accustomed home and becoming Augustinian, or of going to another house of their choosing.

SAN GIOVANNI BATTISTA AND THE REFORM OF
BOLOGNESE CONVENT LIFE

In the decades after the Dominican nuns of Santa Caterina moved into the monastery of San Giovanni Battista, this community would engage in a series of actions that meant additional transfers of nuns from one convent to another and some form of union between San Giovanni Battista and several religious houses in Bologna, at least giving San Giovanni Battista authority over these other houses. San Giovanni Battista became involved in the reform of nunneries outside of the Dominican Order, including a Camaldolese community, a venerable Benedictine house, and yet another that followed Cistercian conventions. These efforts involved the exchange of personnel – for example, a contingent of Dominicans from San Giovanni Battista became Camaldolese in an attempt to reform the nunnery of Santa Cristina, and the prioress herself transferred to a Cistercian nunnery, converting it to a Dominican house.

The picture that emerges is one in which there is a constant churning of personnel from one nunnery to another, often across orders. These series of reforms and unions provide an opportunity to investigate how some of these nuns conceived of their participation in various communities – their own convent, their city, their order. San Giovanni Battista seems to be a convent that develops a sense of itself as a reformer of convents in Bologna, across religious orders.

In documents implementing and recording these actions in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Prioress Angela Griffoni is a key figure in this reform program, in collaboration with a number of church and monastic officials. The idea of Angela as a reformer is

amplified in a later convent chronicle, probably dating to the years around 1600. In a chronicle that is otherwise mostly a translated and narrated account of notarial records with very little embellishment that might bring attention to the community's piety, Angela is held up as a holy woman and reformer.³⁵

On January 16, 1499, seven nuns from San Giovanni Battista moved to Santa Cristina, which had long been a target for reform. The humanist and Camaldolese reformer Ambrogio Traversari visited the house five times in 1433 and early 1434 – on the first visit, he writes that he found them to be better than he expected, but that later had heard from a trusted friend that they were a house of prostitutes.³⁶ On subsequent visits, he urged the nuns to maintain cloister and to observe the rule day by day.

From the description of Santa Cristina at the end of the fifteenth century, it seems that Traversari's exhortations were in vain. The 1499 record of the transfer of nuns from San Giovanni Battista states that the goal of this action was "to tear up the roots of evil, and to sow instead trees bearing good fruit."³⁷

With the goal of implementing reform in the Camaldolese convent, seven nuns transferred from San Giovanni Battista to Santa Cristina. The professions were overseen by the vicar to the prior general of the Camaldolese Order – there was never a question that Santa Cristina would change its rule or affiliation. Instead the nuns sent from San Giovanni Battista would change their own profession, taking on the Rule of Saint Benedict and the customs of the Camaldolese Order. Later in January, one of the transferred nuns,

³⁵ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 166/4650, no. 9, especially fols. 29v–30r.

³⁶ Ambrogio Traversari, *Hodoeporicon*, ed. Vittorio Tamburini (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1985), 114–16.

³⁷ "radices malarum arborum extirpare, et ipsas arbores bonis fructibus inserere." ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 18/4502, no. 40, fol. 1r.

Agostina Aliotti, would become the abbess of Santa Cristina, and was followed in this office by another sister from San Giovanni Battista, Vincenza Dainesi. It seems that the reform did not go as they had hoped, and by 1507, Agostina, Vincenza, and her sister, Luisa, had returned to Dominican life at San Giovanni Battista.³⁸

The lack of clear success in the reform of the Camaldolese Santa Cristina did not deter San Giovanni Battista from later attempts at reforming Bolognese nunneries; in the early years of the sixteenth century, San Giovanni Battista became involved in the reform of two other convents. One of these, Santi Gervasio e Protasio, was a Benedictine house dating to the early twelfth century, while the other, San Guglielmo, was founded as a Cistercian nunnery around 1260. In the early fifteenth century, San Guglielmo spent some time observing the Rule of Saint Augustine,³⁹ and then returned to the Cistercian Order by the 1460s.⁴⁰ In contrast to the strategy employed with Santa Cristina, in these cases nuns from a convent that had been charged with lax observance of the Benedictine Rule transferred to San Giovanni Battista, professing the Augustinian Rule along with Dominican statutes. Though at first this transfer did not involve an official union of the two communities, this administrative move would follow, accompanied – somewhat out of the blue – by the union of the Cistercian convent, San Guglielmo, with San Giovanni Battista.

As was the case with Santa Cristina, the involvement of San Giovanni Battista with the Benedictine Santi Gervasio e Protasio followed charges of laxity for the target of reform, in this case including the rebuke of its abbess for poor enforcement of enclosure. In November 1503, Abbess Simona Caichioli was forbidden to open

³⁸ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 166/4650, no. 9, fol. 29v.

³⁹ ASB Dem., San Guglielmo, 3/737, no. 23.

⁴⁰ Zarri, “Monasteri femminili,” 187.

the guest house of the nunnery or to let anyone into the convent's enclosure without the permission of the bishop's vicar, under pain of excommunication. Excommunication and incarceration would be the punishment of any nun who left the cloister at any time without similar permission. The nuns were ordered to notify the vicar if anyone acted against this decree. Three years later, Simona and another nun, Pantasilea di Lombardia, appeared in front of the vicar general of Bologna and Prioress Angela Griffoni, asking to transfer from San Gervasio to the Dominican San Giovanni Battista. Simona and Pantasilea claimed that the Rule of Saint Benedict was not being followed in San Gervasio, and that they desired to go to San Giovanni Battista, where the Augustinian Rule was well observed. Briefly switching from Latin to the vernacular, the document records Simona's profession vowing to honor God, the Virgin Mary, Saint John the Baptist, and Saint Catherine, the patron saint of the convent whose nuns had transferred to San Giovanni Battista late in the previous century.

Simona's profession presents some difficulties in interpretation. She must have been elderly at this point – the initial profession into San Giovanni Battista occurred in February 1506, and by September of that same year she claimed that because of her advanced age (*senectus*), she could not strictly observe either the Benedictine Rule or that of Saint Augustine, and asked to be allowed to live out her life following the Benedictine Rule outside of the monastery.⁴¹ Her transfer from San Gervasio to San Giovanni Battista is presented as a voluntary act. It is possible that Simona wanted a stricter observance, but found that she was not able to carry it out after a short period in San Giovanni Battista. Nevertheless, given the threats in the 1503

⁴¹ ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 19/4503, no. 26, fol. 2v, "in aliqua honesta domo et cum una socia dicti ordinis morari citra incursum alicuius censura."

decree and Simona’s quick decision that a life of strict observance was not for her, it is conceivable that Simona had strong external encouragement to take this step.

In another document from that same day, it appears that in addition to Simona and Pantasilea, seven other nuns from San Gervasio also transferred to San Giovanni Battista – the total is equal to the number of nuns who are named in the 1503 document mandating that they maintain strict enclosure, though some of the names differ.⁴² What is clear is that a large percentage of San Gervasio’s population left that convent to move to San Giovanni Battista, though any institutional ties between the two houses remained unclear until four years later.

The official union of the two nunneries occurred only in 1510, at the same time that San Giovanni Battista was united with a Cistercian convent. In that year, Cardinal Francesco Alidosi issued a decree that seemed to respond to a request from the prioress of San Giovanni Battista to be allowed to reform two Benedictine nunneries, Santi Gervasio e Protasio, and also San Guglielmo, whose affiliation and rule had varied over the centuries.

In contrast to San Gervasio, there is no definitive indication in San Guglielmo’s records that there were significant disciplinary problems. Nevertheless, Francesco’s report of the petition indicates that the prioress charged both nunneries with lacking enclosure and also lacking shame (*pudicia*), and speaking “with men of diverse states and conditions,” demonstrating that the nuns “did not fear to have immoral conversations, to the danger of their souls.”⁴³ Francesco reports that the late Cardinal Giovanni Stefano Ferreri had sent nuns from San Giovanni Battista to these convents, and similarly had

⁴² ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 19/4503, no. 22.

⁴³ “cum diversorum statum et conditione hominibus et personis inhoneste conversari et colloquia turpia habere non formidabant in animarum suarum periculum.” ASB Dem., San Giovanni Battista, 19/4504, n. 32, fol. 1r–v.

moved several sisters from the lax houses to San Giovanni Battista, aiming to enact a reform. This decree in 1510 officially changed the observance of San Gervasio and of San Guglielmo from Benedictine to Dominican, giving the prioress of San Giovanni Battista authority over both houses. That prioress, however, is not Angela Griffoni, who had left her original nunnery to take charge of San Guglielmo – another nun from San Giovanni Battista, Ippolita Bucchi, presided over San Gervasio.

Though there are signs of dissatisfaction with the changes at San Guglielmo, the union succeeded in instituting Dominican practices at that house. Perhaps Angela's direct involvement in San Guglielmo contributed to the enduring nature of the rule change. Or alternatively, it is possible that San Guglielmo's own historical fluidity of rule and of order affiliation made this additional change more palatable.

The only sign of strife caused by the union was a lawsuit by Suor Violante Ardenghi. In February 1516, under papal pressure, Violante renounced a lawsuit that she had carried on against Angela, and agreed to recognize her as prioress. The text of a document related to this settlement emphasizes that the nunnery had once been of the Order of Saint Bernard (Cistercian), leading to the possibility that part of the issue of the suit is Violante's refusal to acknowledge both the new prioress and the new affiliation of San Guglielmo.

By contrast, the union with San Giovanni Battista and Santi Gervasio e Protasio did not endure. Whether the efforts of nuns transferring to San Gervasio resulted in any reform of discipline in that convent is not visible from the records, but it is clear that the rule change did not persist. The head of the monastery is called "abbadessa" in several property transactions beginning in 1516, a title that is not used among Dominicans. The first to be called this was Ippolita Bucchi, who had formerly been Dominican. She was succeeded by Pantasilea

di Lombardi, who had transferred to San Giovanni Battista with San Gervasio's former abbess in 1506. By 1539, the nunnery is described in a sale of property as following the Rule of St. Benedict.⁴⁴

What does the example of San Giovanni Battista tell us about monastic life in the years just before the advent of the Reformation? The need for reform of several monastic houses in Bologna fits with the general understanding of the fifteenth century as a problematic era in the Church on many fronts. Here we see one nunnery at the center of a reform effort in Bologna that in the end involved around one-third of the nunneries in the city, across several orders. Dominican officials are strikingly absent—the sisters of San Giovanni Battista worked with a Camaldolese official and a series of bishops and cardinals, none of whom, as far as I have been able to ascertain, had Dominican ties. It is likely that San Giovanni Battista's nuns were concerned with enacting reform in their local area across a variety of religious orders, were willing to employ a number of different strategies to do so, and were encouraged or supported by ecclesiastical officials in this effort. But, through trial and error in reforming nunneries across religious orders, it is also likely that San Giovanni Battista became more firmly Dominican.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER CITIES

The communities represented in Bolognese unions include Benedictines and Benedictine reform groups such as Cistercians and Camaldolese; Augustinian canonesses, and Dominican nuns. Dominican convents were the most common group in the city by the fifteenth century, reflecting the suppression or merger of some Augustinian houses and the transformation of others into

⁴⁴ ASB Dem., Santi Gervasio e Protasio, 3/6032, no. 52, fol. 1r.

Dominican convents. In Bologna, the few houses of Poor Clares (there were only two by the mid fourteenth century, with a third founded in 1456) did not take part in any unions. This may reflect their regional scarcity, or alternatively, houses of Poor Clares may tend to have a stronger identification with their own order.

Though the dynamics of monastic unions have not been the primary research question in studies of religious women's lives in other cities, some information that suggests fruitful bases for comparative analysis can be gleaned from studies of Milan and Strasbourg. Examples drawn from Enrico Cattaneo's brief histories of monastic communities in Milan can provide some material for comparison, as can Sigrid Schmitt Hirbodian's detailed study of religious women in late medieval work in Strasbourg.⁴⁵ Investigation of monastic unions in other areas will bring to light a greater variety of circumstances leading to or resulting from consolidations of monastic communities.

In Milan, the Augustinian convent of Sant'Agnese rejected Pope Sixtus IV's request in 1465 that it merge with the Benedictine house of Santa Maria d'Aurona, thereby gaining rights to the Benedictines' larger convent. The reason the nuns offered for their refusal was concern about the reputation of the nuns of Santa Maria d'Aurona.⁴⁶ In 1474, the archbishop asked another Augustinian house, Santa Maria di Vedano, to accept the nuns of Santa Maria d'Aurona and to unite their two buildings by means of a subterranean tunnel. Nevertheless, some of the Benedictines of Santa Maria d'Aurona refused to convert to the Augustinian Rule. They remained segregated from the larger community in a small section of their original nunnery and continued to live as they had done.⁴⁷ In this example, the effort to unite Santa Maria d'Aurona with another convent was initiated

⁴⁵ Cattaneo, "Istituzioni ecclesiastiche Milanesi," 9: 576–662.

⁴⁶ Cattaneo, "Istituzioni ecclesiastiche Milanesi," 9: 620.

⁴⁷ Cattaneo, "Istituzioni ecclesiastiche Milanesi," 9: 604.

by prelates, but the communities that were asked to take in the Benedictine nuns could consent to or reject the request. Sant'Agnese explained their decision to reject the union based on issues of morality rather than incompatibility of rule. Perhaps moved by the need for space to accommodate their sixty nuns, Santa Maria di Vedano assented to the union.

A related example from Milan involves a union between Augustinian and Clarissan houses, also resulting in a community that remained divided for many years. At the behest of Duchess Bianca Maria Visconti, the Augustinian convent of Cappuccio (so named because they had been Poor Clares before their move to Milan) united with the Poor Clares of Sant'Orsola. Though Bianca Maria's initial proposal of the union took place in 1463, the merger was not concluded until 1480. Even at this point, the community remained divided, with some inhabitants continuing to observe the Rule of Saint Augustine and others participating in the Franciscan Observant movement.⁴⁸ These examples from Milan suggest a potential regional tendency in what options religious women saw for themselves. Whereas nuns in Bologna faced with an unwanted union tended to transfer away from the newly combined community to a house of their own choosing, these and other Milanese examples indicate some tolerance for convents that remained internally divided, with different groups observing different rules, though in all cases efforts are made to unify the convents over time.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Cattaneo, "Istituzioni ecclesiastiche Milanesi," 9: 633–4.

⁴⁹ Other examples of Milanese communities with cells observing different rules include Sant'Agostino di Porta Nuova and Santa Caterina di contrata di ferariolis. Over half of Sant'Agostino's nuns decided to convert to the Observant Franciscan movement after hearing the preaching of Bernardino of Siena, while the older sisters desired to remain Augustinian and continued to observe that rule in a small part of the monastery. In the late fifteenth century, Santa Caterina included groups observing the Rules of Saint Benedict and Saint Augustine, as well as nuns of other orders. See Cattaneo, "Istituzioni ecclesiastiche Milanesi," 9: 633–4.

In Strasbourg, seven of the city's ten communities of nuns were Dominican, and in the fifteenth century four of these communities consolidated into two houses. The city of Strasbourg's expansion of their walls in 1475 led to the destruction of five convents (three Dominican and one Magdalene house). The negotiations over the relocation of the nuns affected by the city's plans involved the pope, the city council, the Dominican provincial leaders, and the nuns from these communities.

The Observant community of St. Agnes agreed, despite some hesitancy, to unite with St. Margaretha, which was located inside the existing wall but which had not participated in the Observant reform. There were several proposals for the disposition of the remaining nuns. The city suggested that St. Marx and St. Johannes should unite with St. Katharina, the Dominican convent in the city at which the displaced nuns took refuge after the destruction of their convent. A papal legate proposed that St. Johannes should unite with St. Nikolaus; the nuns of St. Johannes objected to this plan, and appealed to the papacy to prevent its imposition. Dominican provincial authorities put forward a plan for a union of St. Marx and St. Johannes with St. Margaretha. Finally, the city agreed to provide a location and financial support for the building of a new convent that would house the united communities of St. Marx and St. Johannes. The nuns of the two communities negotiated increased donations from the city and finally agreed to the plan in 1477.⁵⁰

These examples indicate that choices available to religious women may have been influenced by regional factors, such as the orders that are present locally, the population density of the area, or the interventions of powerful lay or clerical leaders. For example, Duchess Bianca Maria Visconti initiated several unions as part of a reform

⁵⁰ Schmitt, "Geistliche Frauen," 69–72.

effort in the mid fifteenth century, including the union of the nuns of Cappuccio and Sant'Orsola. Though not all of these were peaceful, reluctant nuns may have had less opportunity to leave the newly combined community than did their Bolognese counterparts because of the interest of the duchess in uniting and reforming these monasteries. The case of Strasbourg shows the intervention both of officials from the order and of civic authorities. The nuns favored some plans and rejected others, negotiating for themselves an outcome that they could live with. These examples and others provide a way to see what actions religious women took when faced with the necessity of changing an important element of their convent's life, and what these actions might indicate about these groups' priorities for their own communal and religious life.

Several questions emerge from comparing the dynamics of unions and suppressions in Bologna and in other cities. One question to consider is the influence of powerful officials, both ecclesiastical and secular, in the management of the monastic community in their region. Individuals such as Cardinal Legate Bertrand de Pouget, Pope Nicolas V, Bishop Niccolò Albergati of Bologna, or Duchess Bianca Maria Visconti of Milan could be motivated to intervene in monastic affairs because of reforming ideals, or they could see women's monastic property as a resource that could be diverted to further their own ecclesiastical priorities. In practice, these two motivations can be difficult to distinguish, since nuns and clerical officials often used the language of reform to advocate actions that would bring them material benefit.

Beyond the influence of local and ecclesiastical politics, further investigation of the rationales that religious women presented regarding their decisions to unite with another house or to resist such a move can demonstrate the variety of ways that they viewed their communities. The evidence from Bologna shows that unions within

orders could still be the source of significant conflict, indicating that nuns sharing the same order and observance did not necessarily see themselves as part of the same community. Continuing studies of other cities and regions where different orders predominated will be valuable.

CONCLUSIONS

From this study of monastic unions and transfers, it is clear that women's monastic life in the later Middle Ages could be anything but stable. Wars, natural disasters, and financial hardship could require nuns to leave their convent, often meaning the merging of two communities. The choices of the religious women and of the prelates who approved these unions and transfers show that the identity of nuns as a community often superseded any allegiance to an order or adherence to a rule.

Nuns in difficult circumstances did not necessarily look to houses of their own order for help. Whether the solutions to these crises involved unions negotiated between convents or a petition to prelates to approve a union requested unilaterally, unions and transfers could occur within or across religious orders. Combining two groups adhering to the same order in one monastic house did little to smooth conflict – in fact, the Augustinian nuns of San Lorenzo chose to transfer to another house and become Cistercian rather than uniting with their fellow Augustinians from Sant'Orsolina. Similarly, though we tend to think of monastic reform in the later Middle Ages as spreading through observant networks within religious orders, San Giovanni Battista's efforts in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries comprised a program of local reforms across religious orders, focusing on individual communities of various orders that were perceived to be in need of reform. Popes, cardinals, and bishops

at times justified unions or transfers across orders as movement to a more austere rule. In other cases, they noted as they approved a union that two communities merging into one house shared a rule and habit. Both the prelates who approved these moves and the women who participated in them approached them pragmatically. Church officials sought to find suitable places for religious women, though they did not always consider the desires of the nuns they managed. Through negotiated unions, aggressive pursuit of desirable monastic homes, and decisions to flee unwanted mergers, monastic women endeavored to make the best possible arrangements for themselves and their communities.

Conclusion

In 1456, a community of Franciscan nuns that were part of the Observant movement within that order moved from Ferrara to Bologna. The new house they established, Corpus Domini, was led by Caterina de' Vigri, who had been in charge of training novices in Ferrara, and had already gained such a reputation for holiness that Duke Borso d'Este of Ferrara appealed to Rome to prevent her from leaving the city.¹ The new Bolognese monastery of Observant Clares, also called Corpus Domini, became one of the most prestigious religious communities in the city. This was in no small part because of the veneration of Caterina as a saint, as well as the community's continued reputation for religious rigor.

The foundation of Corpus Domini was near the beginning of a steady stream of new monastic establishments. Beginning in the 1440s and continuing through the sixteenth century, roughly eight new convents were founded.² Though the increase in the number of religious communities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was much smaller than that of the thirteenth century, it marked a significant change from the paucity of new foundations and the

¹ Gabriella Zarri, "Dalla profezia alla disciplina (1450–1650)," in *Donne e fede: santità e vita religiosa in Italia*, ed. Gabriella Zarri and Lucetta Scaraffia (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1994), 183.

² Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," passim. Two additional convents, Santi Leonardo e Orsola and Santa Maria Maddalena di Via Galliera, were established to provide new homes for existing communities that could no longer stay in the buildings that housed them.

disappearance of existing communities in the previous century and a half. As was the case with Corpus Domini, some of these new foundations originated when convents in other cities sent nuns to Bologna to found new houses affiliated with their order. In 1443, a nun from Pistoia came to Bologna to found Santissima Trinità.³ This was a house of Gesuate, an Augustinian order founded in the late fourteenth century in Florence.⁴ Later in the century, Servite nuns from Piacenza came to Bologna to establish a new community, Sant'Omobono.⁵ In the sixteenth century, new Dominican and Clarissan houses formed. Within the city, Corpus Domini sent out a group of nuns to found a new Observant Clarissan house, Santi Bernardino e Marta, in 1526.

Though many of these new houses had clear affiliation with centralized monastic orders, new Augustinian houses that did not have ties to any larger order continued to emerge. At least three such communities were founded in the sixteenth century, including the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, established by Andrea Bonfigli for four of his daughters.⁶ Thus, the establishment of Augustinian houses that were not under the control of religious orders and represented a local, more autonomous form of monasticism continued to have appeal for some patrons and founding members of monastic communities.

Over the course of the later Middle Ages, centralized religious orders came to play a substantial role in organizing religious women's lives, though not all communities of nuns were integrated into these

³ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 217.

⁴ Day, *Dictionary of Religious Orders*, 215. The order was founded in 1367 by Caterina Colombini in partnership with her cousin Giovanni Colombini, founder of the Gesuati.

⁵ Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 214.

⁶ On Santa Maria degli Angeli, see Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 191. The other two communities fitting this description were Sant'Elena and Santa Maria della Consolazione, later known as Santa Maria della Concezione. Zarri, "Monasteri femminili," 179 and 193.

orders. This continued to be the case in the early modern period, though – as had been the case in earlier centuries – some convents followed a basic rule, remained under the bishop's jurisdiction, and did not claim any affiliation with centralized monastic orders. Some convents were integrated into centralized monastic orders through incorporation, while the inhabitants of others wore the habit and followed the practices of centralized orders while remaining under local jurisdiction. The efforts to organize monastic life and to promote centralized orders that had begun in earnest in the early thirteenth century had exerted a substantial effect on monastic life, but this process was a slow and sporadic one. Even by the end of the Middle Ages, participation in monastic life could take a variety of forms.

In this study, I have aimed to show that over the course of the Middle Ages, religious women became more integrated into centralized religious orders rather than increasingly marginalized, and that those communities that remained outside of these orders did not necessarily do so because of rejection by religious men, but instead carried on their lives according to a model of monastic life that was more focused on the local environment and resembled an earlier form of monastic organization. Religious women were part of complex networks, including male personnel of religious orders, secular clergy from popes to parish priests, and nearby houses of other religious women from a variety of orders. In addition to the influence of other religious men and women, family networks, governing regimes, and local events – from the flourishing of the city in the thirteenth century to internal factional strife and attacks from neighboring powers – had a profound effect on religious women's lives.

While I have concentrated on one important Italian city, similar investigations of other cities and other regions show that analogous

trends occurred elsewhere. Gertrud Jaron Lewis's work on Dominican convents in Germany has demonstrated that many of these houses had begun as beguinages, adopted the Augustinian Rule in the thirteenth century, and later became Dominican, demonstrating a pattern of integration of women's communities into the Dominican Order that is very similar to the trends I have found in Bologna.⁷ Sigrid Schmitt's study of religious women in Strasbourg brings to light dynamics in the relationship between nunneries, orders, and city government that have parallels to those present in the present study — these include fluctuations in affiliations to religious orders, negotiations over the circumstances of monastic unions, and civic officials taking an active role in managing and providing financial support for communities of religious women.⁸ In various regions, different orders may have exerted an organizing force on local religious life. For example, Enrico Cattaneo's catalog of Milanese monastic houses demonstrates that many autonomous communities became houses of Poor Clares in the late Middle Ages. This was in part because of the influence of Bernardino of Siena and of Duchess Bianca Maria Visconti, who led a program of monastic reform in the fifteenth century.⁹

Additional research on religious men in Benedictine and Augustinian communities that were not part of centralized orders will be necessary to allow students of monastic life to determine the extent to which religious men and women differed on this particular issue. Looking briefly at religious men in Bologna, it is clear that some communities continued to live in communities of Augustinian canons and Benedictine monks that remained local in focus and were slow to organize themselves into regional congregations with

⁷ Lewis, *By Women, for Women*, 10–31.

⁸ Schmitt, "Geistliche Frauen," 41.

⁹ Cattaneo, "Istituzioni ecclesiastiche," 9: 576–662.

regular meetings, as mandated at the Fourth Lateran Council. Church reformers continued to work to provide governing organizations for religious life. An example of this is Niccolò Albergati's efforts in the fifteenth century to create congregations of canons in central and northern Italy to provide governing structures for disparate houses. The Bolognese community of San Giovanni in Monte and San Vittore became part of a newly revitalized Congregation of Lateran Canons, while Santa Maria di Reno and San Salvatore became part of the Congregation of San Salvatore, which included houses in Lucca and Siena. I hope in future research to explore the ways in which emerging norms of participation in centralized orders influenced monastic life for both men and women, and how communities navigated the tension between participation in transnational monastic orders and integration into their local religious environment.¹⁰

Religious women in the late Middle Ages navigated a changing religious and social landscape. The history of women's monastic houses in Bologna, their foundation, growth, and suppression, reveals the range of choices nuns could exercise and the factors that constrained their choices. Whether they were incorporated into centralized religious orders, associated with those orders through rule and habit, participants in smaller congregations, or independent houses following a basic rule, the cases in this study demonstrate the porosity of boundaries between religious orders as well as the practicality and ingenuity of religious women.

¹⁰ Foschi, "Gli ordini religiosi," 490.

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